Keyboard

TORTOISE
The Catastrophists
John McEntire
Talks Gear

Carla Bley
at 80

5 Ways to Play Like ROBERT GLASPER

KEITH NOEL EMERSON
1944~2016

A Personal Tribute

REVIEWS
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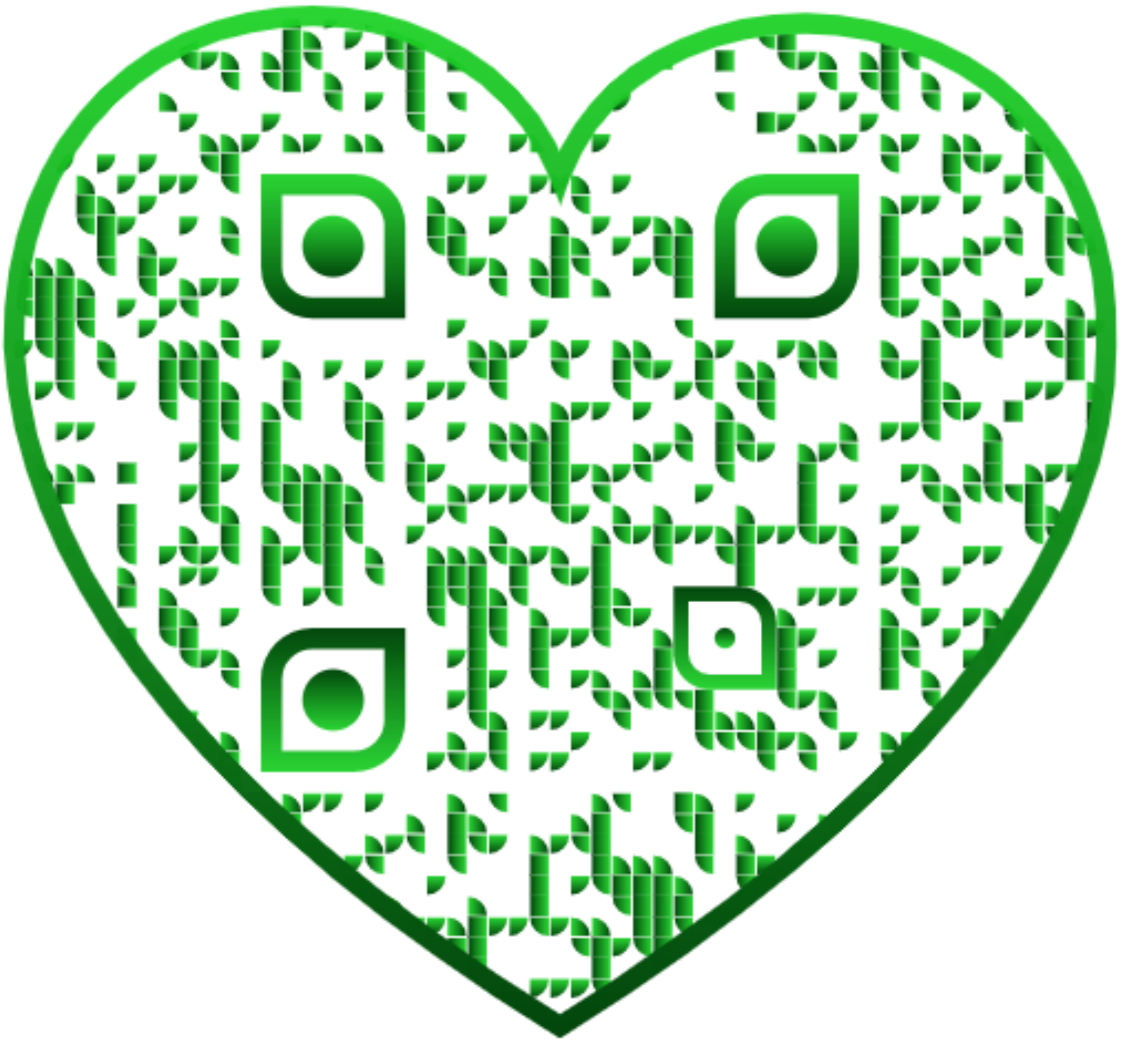

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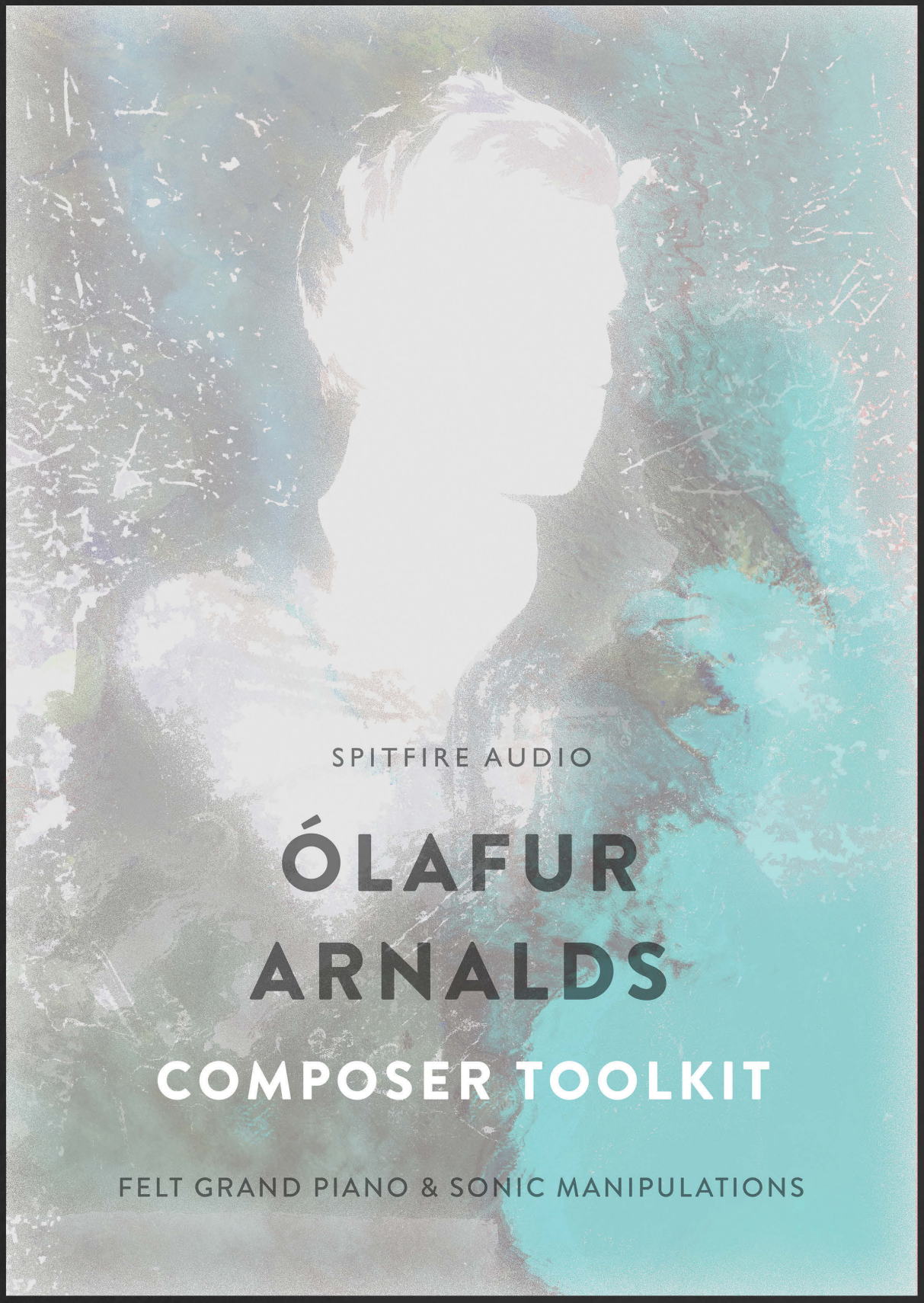

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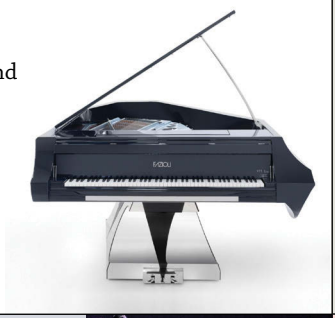

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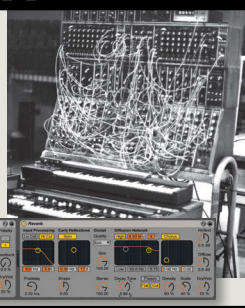

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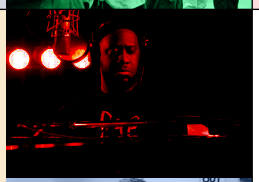

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Read our Moog Monday series: classic synthesizer tips and observations by the late, great Bob Moog, from the early days of *Keyboard*.

keyboardmag.com/june2016

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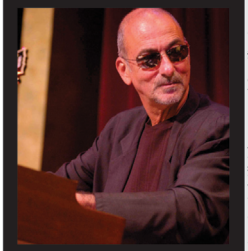

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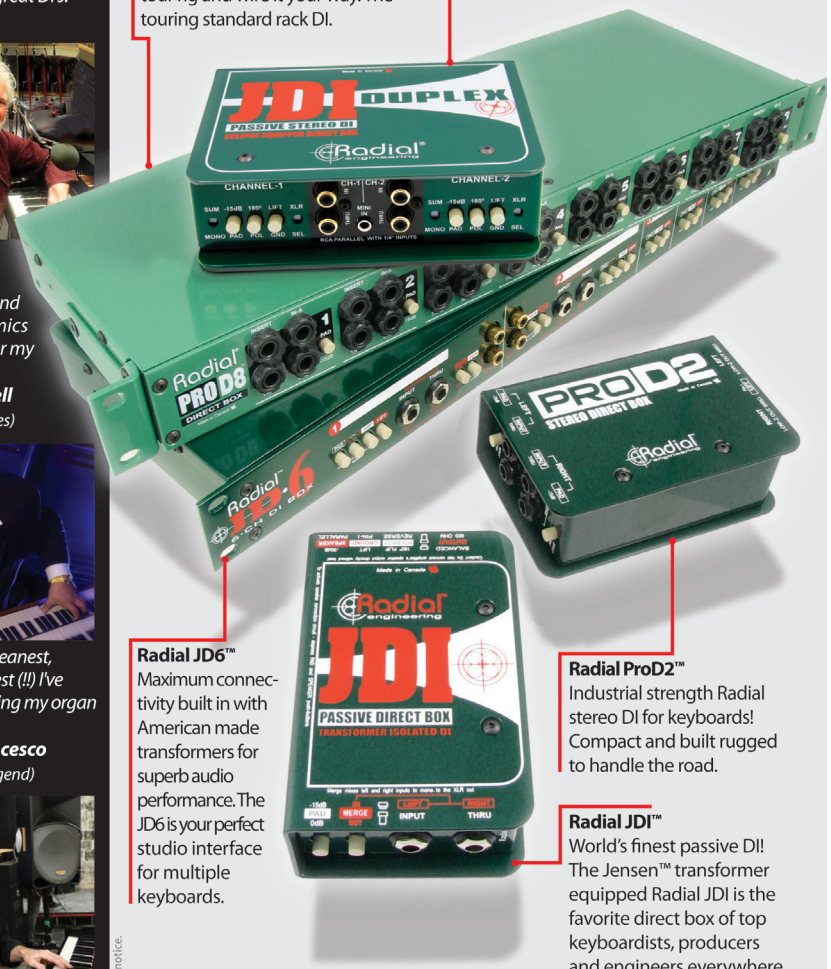

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Editor's Note

While it was with great sadness and shock that we learned of Keith Emerson's passing in March, I wasn't surprised to see his friends, colleagues, and fans celebrate his colorful life by sharing anecdotes about him rather than simply mourning his loss. And it is in this spirit that we honor the life and work of one of rock's greatest keyboardists and composers by letting those close to him share their personal stories and remember his artistry, generosity, and sense of humor.

Assembling a tribute such as this is a labor of love, and I want to thank Senior Correspondent Jerry Kovarsky for his dedication and hard work in putting it together. Special thanks are also in order for Jack Hotop, Ellie Schwartz, and Tony Ortiz for their important coordinating efforts and support; to the photographers who provided personal photos; and to everyone who shared their stories with us: There are many more than we had room for in these pages. To read them all in an expanded version of our Emerson tribute, visit keyboardmag.com.

One of the contributors to our tribute, Al Goff quoted Keith as saying, "Always think about the good times as they get us through the bad." This reminds us that, at times such as this, it's meaningful to love and cherish the important people in our lives that are still here. With that in mind, I am excited about celebrating the 80th birthday of Carla Bley with an exclusive interview, as well as hearing from John McEntire of Tortoise about their recent release. So, in the words of the ELP classic "Karn Evil 9":

"Welcome back my friends to the show that never ends. We're so glad you could attend—come inside, come inside."

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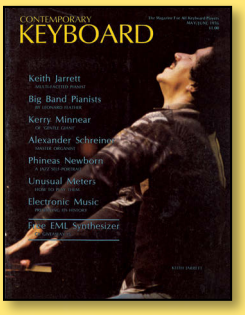
Gino Robair
Editor in Chief



+ 40 YEARS AGO TODAY

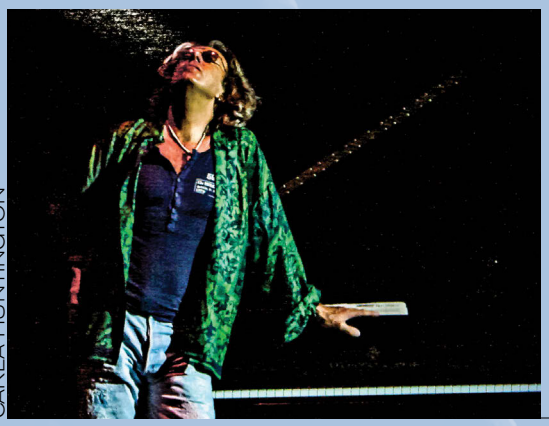
We continue our 40th birthday celebration by looking back at *Contemporary Keyboard*'s fifth issue (May/June 1976), which featured **Keith Jarrett** on the cover and included interviews with C&W pianist **Ronnie Milsap**, **Kerry Minnear** of Gentle Giant, jazz pianist **Phineas Newborn**, and Mormon Tabernacle organist **Alexander Schreiner**, as well as articles on big band pianists and the history of electronic keyboard music.

In his interview with Jarrett, author Len Lyons asked the pianist how he felt about the recent trend towards using multiple keyboards. "The 'keyboard' idea is one of the immense illusions in music at the moment," wJarrett answered. "The keyboard is being used like a Parker Brothers game, a version of three-dimensional chess, which they can sell to people who can't play two-dimensional chess. To simplify: People are making the problem of getting something out of themselves into an exterior problem of finding the right instruments to get it out with. It's like saying the reason I can't paint a masterpiece is because I don't' have the right paints."

When asked how he distinguishes between improvisation and composition in his solo concerts, Jarrett replied, "Well, there's no distinction between the two in the way I deal with it, although there are many differences in the two processes. You might call improvisation 'spontaneous composition,' which would connect the two. One the other hand, when you write something down, no matter how preconceived it is, it's still spontaneous because you can always change your mind when the pencil is about the touch the paper. Even if you edit three hundred times, it's still spontaneous each time."

Key Secrets A Patch of Silence

In previous columns I've covered the benefits of layering synths (richer sounds), daisy-chaining them through their aux inputs (for compact gig setups), and running digital synths through the external oscillator inputs in analog synths (for filtering and flavor). This photo shows a fourth technique: routing a dry analog synth through the digital effects in a MIDI module. One useful trick when layering MIDI synths is to create silent patches so you can switch from single timbres to layers simply by changing programs. That's more reliable than remembering to grab a volume knob. My favorite silent-patch trick comes from an A-list music director who will remain anonymous. He programmed dummy patches with shocking names and switched them remotely to try to crack up the keyboardist during the show. David Battino



CARLA HUNTINGTON

A Keith Emerson Playlist: Pianists

As anyone who knew him will tell you, Keith Emerson loved to listen to and talk about music—of all kinds. And although the names of organists who influenced him are well-documented—the earliest was Brother Jack McDuff with the track "Rock Candy" *from Live!*, while Jimmy Smith and "Big" John Patton (check out the album *Along Came John*) were perennial faves—we thought it would be fun to share a few of Emerson's favorite piano tracks with you.

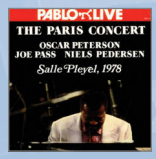
Important among his personal collection were albums recorded from the '40s through the '60s by artists such as Wynton Kelly, Art Tatum, Bill Evans, George Shearing, Oscar Peterson, and Dave Brubeck (a major figure for him). The following, however, is a handful of cuts of which Keith was particularly fond.

Dave Brubeck: "Blue Rondo a la Turk" from *Time Out*; the classic quartet navigating an innovative piece that skillfully used 9/8, which, later, is integrated with a swinging 4/4.

Floyd Cramer: "On the Rebound"; a country-tinged pop-instrumental from 1961 by a Nashville player who worked with Elvis Presley and Patsy Cline, among many others.

Thelonious Monk: *The Thelonious Monk Orchestra at Town Hall*; Keith was particularly a fan of the arrangements on this release.

Oscar Peterson (with Joe Pass and Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen): "Sweet Georgia Brown" from *The Paris Concert*; a high-speed chase over and through the changes of this well-known standard.



Dudley Moore: "Waltz for Suzy" from *Songs Without Words* and "Waterloo" from *Song for Suzy*; two distinctly different tracks—the first based around a haunting melody and the second, a Latin-jazz feature for the pianist/comedian.

—Jerry Kovarsky and Gino Robair

BILL EVANS
Some Other Time: The Lost Session from the Black Forest

A newly discovered trio session you need to hear

Resonance Records continues to unearth and release recordings that are not only historically important, but are musical exceptional and impeccably recorded. Tracked at MPS Studios in Villingen, Germany, on June 20, 1968, *Some Other Time: The Lost Session from the Black Forest* captures Evans in a formidable trio session with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Jack DeJohnette—the only studio recording of the group featuring DeJohnette and made five days after the Grammy winning Verve release *Bill Evans at the Montreux Jazz Festival.*

On this date, the band is in fine form, flowing through a set of pieces in a seemingly effortless manner, yet with a high level of spontaneity and interaction. And it's a treat to hear DeJohnette stretching out and challenging the others with his occasional asymmetrical phrasing.

While disc one is a solid first-takes-only set, the second disc includes pieces that are, at times, a bit more rough and were originally considered outtakes. This is evident as Evans takes somewhat off-the-cuff solo trips through "It's Alright With Me" and "Lover Man (Oh Where Can You Be)." But, thankfully, these tracks were included because they have a musicality that I wouldn't have wanted to miss.

GIUSEPPE PINO

L-R: Eddie Gomez and Jack DeJohnette with Bill Evans.

Available as a two-disc set—CDs or limited-edition, hand-numbered LPs on 180-gram vinyl—the package also includes extensive liner notes that include interviews with Gomez and DeJohnette; essays by the project's producer Zev Feldman, critic Marc Myers, and MPS Studio engineer/studio manager Friedhelm Schulz; and plenty of never-before-seen photos. Overall, it's an excellent presentation of exceptional music from a trio I wish we could hear more from. Gino Robair

NEW GEAR

BY GINO ROBAIR

CASIO CELVIANO GRAND HYBRID GP-400BK

WHAT In addition to the three historically important instrument sounds (Berlin, Hamburg, and Vienna grand pianos) from the GP-500BP and GP-300 BP, this digital piano has full-length grand piano keys, a new action mechanism, a curved back panel, thicker legs and side panels, and a black wood-grain finish. **WHY** By combining materials and designs from C. Bechstein with the AiR Grand Sound Source system, the GP-400BK provides a realistic grand piano feel and tone quality.
$4,999 | casiomusicgear.com

MODARTT HANS RUCKERS II HARPSICHORD FOR PIANOTEQ

WHAT A physically modeled instrument based on a copy by Matthias Griewisch of the Hans Ruckers II le Jeune instrument (1624). This software version adds a 2-octave extension to the overall range as well as three registers—4', and upper and lower 8'. The pedal choices include sustain, soft, buff stop (muted), and bassoon (rattling sound). **WHY** A virtual harpsichord offering the flexibility that physical modeling provides over sample playback.
$59 | pianoteq.com

BOSS RC-202 LOOP STATION

WHAT This table-top, dual stereo looper offers multi-effects (4 input effects; 4 track effects), a phantom-powered XLR mic input, instrument and stereo line inputs, 64 phrase-memory slots, 17 rhythms routable to the headphones, and it works as a USB audio/MIDI interface. Effects include ring modulation, lo-fi, P. Shift, and others. Accepts MIDI input, expression pedal and footswitches. **WHY** A smaller, more portable version of the RC-505 looper, but a similarly powerful feature set.
$299 street | bossus.com

KORG STAGEMAN 80

WHAT An 80W, dual-speaker P.A. system that combines a mic input, two instrument jacks and a stereo aux input with rhythm playback (4 GB of loops by real drummers in 24 genres), a tuner, footswitch and headphone jacks, EQ and reverb effects, as well as audio playback, recording and overdubbing to an SD card. Powers from AC or 8 D batteries. **WHY** A highly portable, affordable P.A. system that offers multitrack recording and drum-loop playback.
$499 | korgusa.com

SAMPLE LOGIC MORPHESTRA 2

WHAT A software instrument (for Kontakt 5) providing 4 Soundcore engines that can play up to eight sources and utilize the Step Animator, Morph Animator, and 3D Mixer. Rearrange the insert effects modules as you work. Includes 26GB sample library and 5,000 presets (44.1kHz/24-bit resolution) placed within three categories—Atmospheres, Percussives, and Instrumentals. **WHY** Blend samples of traditional instruments and real-world sounds in a variety of sophisticated and musical ways. **$499 | samplelogic.com**

KURZWEIL CPG220W

WHAT This digital mini-grand from Kurzweil's Home series provides 128 sounds culled from the PC3 and Artis line of keyboards, including a new German 9' concert grand, additional acoustic and electric pianos, orchestral ensembles, choir, and 98 rhythms. Amenities include wood-embedded, graded Italian action with 10 levels of sensitivity, 2-track recording, a 200W 4-speaker sound system, and a bench. **WHY** A high-quality, grand piano experience in a more convenient size. **$7,199 street | kurzweil.com**

SOFTUBE MODULAR

WHAT Designed in collaboration with Dieter Doepfer to perform and sound like a hardware Eurorack synthesizer, this software plug-in comes with six virtual Doepfer modules and nearly two dozen utility modules (sequencer, delay, mixer, etc.). Additional modules modeled after Doepfer, Intellijel, and other manufacturers' products are available separately. **WHY** Because you want the analog-style interface and tone of a patchable hardware synth in an affordable (and manageable) virtual instrument. **$99 | softube.com**

YAMAHA ARIUS YDP-143 AND YDP-163

WHAT Two digital console pianos, based on a sampled 9' Yamaha CFIIIS concert grand piano. Supports the Digital Piano Controller iOS app for selecting sounds and initiating recording, among other functions. The YDP-163 (shown) has a GH3 graded-hammer action that allows for quicker note repetition, while the YDP-143 utilizes the GHS graded hammer action. **WHY** Built to meet the needs and price considerations of the student and returning/aspiring keyboard player. **$1,499 and $1,999 | usa.yamaha.com**

All prices are manufacturer's suggested retail (list) unless otherwise noted. Follow keyboardmag.com/gear and @keyboardmag on Twitter for up-to-the-minute gear news.

Cutting Edge Grands

ACOUSTIC PIANO HIGHLIGHTS FROM MUSIKMESSE 2016

BY STEPHEN FORTNER

FAZIOLI ARIA

The well-respected Italian manufacturer exhibited its new Aria piano, which looks even cleaner than its M. Liminal grand (both were penned by famed French designer Philippe Gendre). The Aria sits on a central podium as opposed to multiple legs, creating an appearance of floating in mid air. Brand manager Luca Fazioli says it's intended to look like a yacht (and perhaps to live on one).

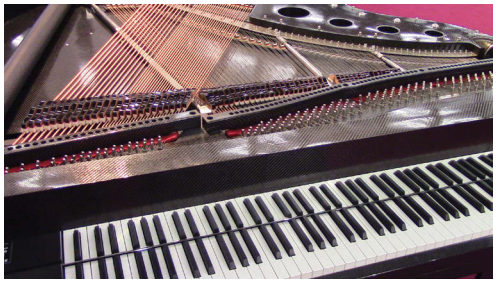
I also got a look at a soundboard technology Fazioli is developing that fuses three layers of spruce, with the middle layer being thinner and its grain running perpendicular to the outer two layers. The result is increased rigidity and consistency of tone in environments where temperature and humidity may vary greatly. **fazioli.com**

Fazioli Aria

PHOENIX CARBIANO

Although it was announced in 2012, this is the first prototype we've seen of the Phoenix Carbiano, which incorporates laser-cut carbon fiber in its design to bear the string tension of the harp. One advantage of carbon fiber is low mass; about one third that of a conventional grand piano of the same size. Another is near imperviousness to temperature and humidity extremes. Carbon-fiber hammer shafts are also argued to result in more immediate and responsive playing.

I found the floor model to be crystal-clear and articulated but leaving a little to be desired in the bass. Not that this couldn't or won't be corrected—in theory you could go larger, add more wood in the soundboard area, and so on. Nonetheless, it's a major proof-of-concept and offers a solution for people and venues that might otherwise not be able to maintain a grand piano. **phoenixpianos.co.uk**



Phoenix Carbiano

FIND INTELLIGENT PIANO

An unexpected attention grabber at Musikmesse was from a Chinese almost-startup called FIND, and at this time the prototypes on display were simply referred to as the Intelligent Piano. These are real acoustic pianos with self-playing mechanisms and the biggest, highest-resolution displays we've ever seen on any musical instrument; not one but *two* 4K widescreens, taking up the entire width of the fallboard and rising from the keyboard to what would be the height of the music stand.

For learning, songs can be loaded and displayed in a split view that combines scrolling sheet music with either a Guitar Hero-style piano-roll view of colored blocks falling towards the keys (the idea being to hit them as soon as they reach the bottom of the screen), or a one-to-one scale onscreen keyboard with video of real hands playing the correct notes. You can slow down the tempo and transpose the pitch, and if you play a mistake, the system can stop and wait for you to find the right notes before resuming the song. Recording and playback are supported, with the notes appearing in on the staff in real time.

I was impressed by how good the upright and baby grand versions sounded simply as pianos, and by how well the educational features worked. Though other major brands more familiar to the U.S. market achieve similar goals with things like iPad integration, it's powerfully immersive to sit in front of displays this large—you feel surrounded by and a part of what you're trying to play. And since functionality is obviously a matter of software (though I didn't find out what kind of embedded computer or OS the Intelligent Piano was running), I suspect that what I saw is only the tip of the iceberg of potential musical applications. **epiano.be** ♫

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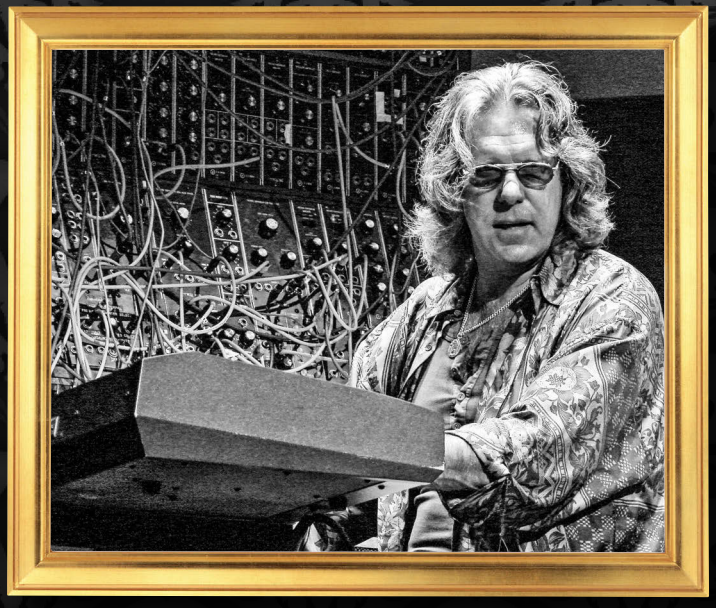

KEITH NOEL EMERSON

A PERSONAL TRIBUTE FROM HIS FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES

1944–2016

BY JERRY KOVARSKY

THE IMPACT THAT KEITH EMERSON HAD ON MUSICIANS AND FANS AROUND THE world is immeasurable. He graced our cover no less than eight times, and his music and gear was covered in several other issues. We'll be posting them online for you to enjoy in the coming months (see the sidebar **"Emerson in Our Pages," page 22**).

CARLA HUNTINGTON

BRIAN G. WILSON

MARK MANDER

Following his death on March 10, we felt the best way to honor Keith's memory was to hear from many of the musicians and others who worked closely with him and knew him best. To them he was Emo, Fingers, Keith; but mostly he was a dear friend. Thanks to them all for sharing, and to Ellie Schwartz and Jack Hotop for helping to coordinate our talks. Keith—may your music and influence continue to be heard and felt for generations to come. Thank you for sharing your humble brilliance with us all.

2009 MARI KAWAGUCHI

Keith Emerson, Les McCann, and Brian Auger

CARL PALMER
(ELP, ASIA, THE CARL PALMER BAND/ELP LEGACY BAND)

"I first met Keith in 1967; I was playing at Battersea Park College with Fleetwood Mac, depping [subbing] for Mick[y] Fleetwood. Top of the bill was The Nice. I had heard of them but never saw the band live, and I got to say, 'Hi,' to Keith after the show. He was a phenomenal player and I became an instant fan. So when I was contacted a few years later to audition for a new band he was forming, I had to go, although I was doing very well with Atomic Rooster at the time. There were very few keyboard players of that caliber: He was incredibly inventive and his musical direction, playing classical adaptations, was pretty much what I always wanted to do. So there was an immediate synergy. You all know the rest of the story…

"Keith was the greatest musician I've ever played with. We had a total of 16 years together making music and it was a fantastic experience. Keith was an individual who took his music seriously and tried to push everything he did to new heights. I'll be doing a number of concerts and festivals this year in tribute to him."

BRIAN AUGER
(TRINITY, OBLIVION EXPRESS)

"I first heard Keith and the Nice play at a show we both did in Croydon. He played 'America' and I thought he was just unbelievable. Our paths didn't cross much back then, but years later he told me that he saw me playing at the Marquee Club and I was playing 'Rock Candy' by Jack McDuff, which was one of his favorite tunes. We shared a love for pianists like Hampton Hawes, Dave Brubeck, and Oscar Peterson, as well. So we both had many of the same influences but took them in different directions. His technique was unbelievable, and his sense of orchestration within a rock context was something to behold.

"Fast-forward a few decades and we find out we're living only a few miles from each other in California. It was you [Jerry Kovarsky] who brought us together, at that dinner we had in 2006. We hit it off fabulously and became tight friends. I liked his gentle sense of humor, and we shared so much in common, being of the same 'vintage.' He was such a huge star around the world, but had no real sense of ego. We would call each other and go to dinner, and especially go out to hear music. I will miss those evenings and his company very much."

Carl Palmer and Keith Emerson.

2013, BRUCE PILATO

JEFF "SKUNK" BAXTER **(GUITARIST FOR THE BEST, STEELY DAN, DOOBIE BROS.)**

"I first met Keith at the China Club in L.A. back in the '90s. I was in the house band, and Keith would come in and play all the time. The band would include John Entwistle on bass, and various guitar players, like Joe Walsh, lots of studio guys. We had great fun seriously playing, not just jamming. One night John and I were talking and thinking, 'This is too good; we should do something more serious.' A well-known publicist Michael Jensen offered to arrange a couple of shows in Japan so we solidified the band: Keith, John, Joe, Simon Phillips, and a singer buddy of mine Rick Livingstone. We didn't know what to call ourselves, and being such shy wallflowers, we decided on The Best. [*Laughs*.]

"We started rehearsing, and the great thing was everyone was a fan of each other's work and did their homework to make it sound right. Everyone brought their unique style to the band, and you might not think it would work, but it did. As an example of what Keith brought to the project, we were covering one of John's tunes, 'Boris the Spider.' It's not very complicated, but while we were playing, for fun, I started playing a bit of the music cue from *Jaws* and Keith jumps right on it, with the right French horn sound and everything. I look over at John, who was a classically trained French horn player, and start playing the intro to Mussorgsky's 'Night on Bald Mountain.' He knew it, and again Keith was right on it. From there we started quoting Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring,* and Keith could cover it all. When we got to Japan and whipped out that arrangement the audience was dumbfounded: They had no idea this group of people could go to those places.

"I took my parents on that trip; my Dad was a historian and was in WWII, and Keith was into those things, so they really hit it off. We were making good money for the gigs, so I asked Michael if he could find a bunch of kids from an orphanage and we'd take them to Disneyland, Tokyo, to give something back. I have two favorite images from that day. One was the 'Ox,' John Entwistle, standing there with six kids crawling all over him, and loving it. And the same about Keith: He really spent time with the kids and you could see how much he was into making them happy.

"After that tour Keith and I would hang out, and we did some recording. He did a brilliant arrangement of 'People Are Strange' for a Doors tribute CD that he had me play some Django-ish guitar on. I really loved the man: He was unique; a tremendous talent, with a lot of emotional depth. He was constantly thinking about music, and I think composing in his mind. I remember looking at him one day and saying, 'Man, your brain is loud today!' And Keith just smiled back and said, 'Yeah, I know.'"

MARC ANDRE BERTHIAUME
(TOUR TECH, STAGE MANAGER)

"We first met in 1978. I was in the nosebleed section of the Olympic Stadium concert, not toking, but still getting a contact high from the 58,000-plus fans in attendance. Later, I would tell Keith I was at that show, 5th from left, seat 503—remember me? And he'd respond, 'Of course, I even looked straight at you,' the same line he gave everyone that would ask that same question.

"Flash-forward to 1997: ELP is gearing up for another world tour. Through a series of events, I ended up being the monitor engineer. Hundreds of shows with him, and he never lost it. You gave him his mix, and that was pretty much it, with a few tweaks here and there. In 2005, I get a call: 'Hey, it's Keith Emerson. Want to be my keyboard tech?' I gratefully accepted. 'Hey Keith, remember me? I was the guy in seat 503 at the Olympic Stadium.' 'Of course I do, you were wearing that thing,' came the reply.

"I worked with Keith from 2005 to the 2012 final ELP show at the High Voltage festival in London—a fitting end to ELP. I suggested he throw knives at the stack of Marshalls: He liked that idea, but was worried because Carl may be too close. And he told me the story of how they were on tour with the Jimi Hendrix Experience. As he looked to his Leslies to throw his knives, he spotted a guy crouched down and filming with a super 8 camera. And how this guy's eyes opened wide when he saw the knives fly in his direction. The guy was Hendrix.

"I became the band tech on the Keith Emerson Band tours; some great shows, and a few transcendental ones. I'd sit stage right, handling patch changes, making white wine spritzers, and watching this genius work. My favorite memories are whenever there was an acoustic piano around: Keith would gravitate to it, and really play; mostly blues and jazz. He was in the moment.

"Now I am left here looking back at fond memories of the Keith not onstage; that smile and the quick puns. And his great laugh. Sitting on his terraced deck, watching the sunset over a couple of glasses of Pinot Grigio. We'd talk of life, women, music, women, new keyboard equipment, women, Robert Moog, and… women. I'm sitting here writing this, looking up at a limited edition LP of the first Keith Emerson Band album, with his inscription: 'To Kirky, a man who dares go where no man has gone before.'

"Well, I did, and I enjoyed the ride. I'm going to miss you, my brother."

MARC BONILLA
(GUITARIST, PRODUCER: KEITH EMERSON BAND)

"My first encounter with Keith was in 1973 at the Oakland Civic Center during ELP's *Brain Salad Surgery* tour. He leapt off the stage with his Moog ribbon controller during 'Tarkus' and landed right in front of me. He gave me this curious look and smiled as if to say, 'See you in 16 years, mate. Maybe we'll do something.'

MARI KAWAGUCHI

Marc Andre Berthiaume and Keith Emerson.

"In 1989, I was playing at a pub in San Jose, Calif., when in comes this person who proceeds to study us. I thought, 'That guy looks like Keith Emerson,' but I quickly shrugged it off, finished the tune and took a break. As he's walking up to me, I said to myself, 'That *is* Keith Emerson!' He introduces himself and asks me the name of the last tune we played, and if we were planning on recording it. I said yes. He says, 'Do you mind if I play piano on it?' All I could think to say in my state of shock and bewilderment was, "Well, what have you done?' And without a flinch he starts to calmly list his resume, starting with The Nice and moving into ELP before I could stop him and confess that it was just a joke.

"We began touring in 1998 with The Boys Club (with Glenn Hughes and Ronnie Montrose) and then as The Keith Emerson Band in 2006. He enjoyed reworking ELP tunes to exploit guitar and was always open to whatever ideas came down the creative pike. He was also very keen on improvisation during the show and would pick up stakes and turn left at a moment's notice, which kept us all on our toes, and would give the audience something special and unique.

"When Keith suggested I produce the *Keith Emerson Band* album, I was honored and a bit apprehensive at the prospect. Here was a hero of mine and I was going to tell *him* what to do and how to play? It was a difficult hurdle to get past, but once we did, it was well worth the effort. The first time this occurred was during the Hammond solo in 'Marche Train.' Keith had shaved off a handful of passes and I could tell he was getting a little frustrated at not giving me what this 'producer' wanted. Then he says, 'Right, run it again.' And he carved off five or six amazing takes of keyboard gymnastics! After that, we knew that there was a hump we needed to get over before all the ideas accelerated into 'flow mode,' and we always found ourselves with an embarrassment of riches.

"Keith's ambition always was to conduct his own compositions. The opportunity presented itself with maestro Terje Mikkelsen in 2010. We went to Munich, Germany to record the *Three Fates Project*, which was a pinnacle for Keith as well as the rest of us. We had re-orchestrated some of his ELP compositions and when heard in that context, you realize that he was a composer of the highest stature. When the orchestra was in rehearsals, Keith was at the back of the hall, sitting by himself. I walked back to see him and he had tears in his eyes. He said that this was a dream come true for him; finally having 'Tarkus' performed the way he had always heard it.

"The last concert we played together was at Barbican Hall in London with the BBC Orchestra in July of 2015. It was the first time much of this music had been heard. Keith was in high spirits and performed flawlessly. He was finally in his element. It seemed befitting and proper that his last gig was his best gig. I have no doubt he will take his place among the musical greats that this world has gifted us with. As it should be."

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AL GOFF
(HAMMOND ORGAN TECHNICIAN)

"My first encounter with Keith was in 1972: I was working for my Dad in his Hammond organ dealership in Hartford, Conn., unboxing and prepping new organs and Leslie speakers. He asked me to prepare a new L-100 for a show rental. A few days later, we delivered it to the ELP show at the Coliseum. I watched ELP play from side-stage directly across from Keith and realized this band was unlike anything I had ever seen or heard before.

"Late in the show, Keith slid the L-100 toward the audience and began rocking it back and forth so the reverberation springs crashed loudly. He removed a large knife from his belt, showed it to the audience, and stabbed the upper keyboard, wedging two playing keys down. Keith stabbed the upper manual again with a second knife and turned the L-100 off-and-on several times in succession, which produced a sound as if the organ was screaming for help. My Dad heard the wailing from back stage, saw the knives in the organ and was as angry as I had ever seen him. One of the crew told him not to worry, this was part of the show, and that the organ would be okay. Keith broke a dozen or so keys with his knives and threw them into to the audience, who went absolutely wild, and so did my Dad! He called the Hammond Organ Company the next day to complain. Keith told me years later that Hammond sent him a letter telling him they did not want to sell him L-100's. But in reality, the factory sales manager told me they knew this was a huge marketing plus for them, as L-100 sales increased significantly. I never realized that would be the start of a long series of Emerson encounters through the next 40 years.

"As with so many pro Hammond players, Keith became a friend as well as a client, and we talked over the years about his life and upcoming events. We always reached out when one of the players we knew died. I remember talking to him when Billy Preston, Jimmy Smith, Jimmy McGriff, Jack McDuff, and Charles Earland died, as well as Jon Lord and Ray Manzarek. I also called Keith as soon as I heard Bob Moog died, and again when Lemmy died, and in both cases, he was particularly upset. We talked about the difficulty of losing our friends and he would always say something positive like 'Yet, we keep moving on' or 'Tomorrow is another day.' Keith called me when my daughter died suddenly and talked to me for two hours. He told me life wasn't going to be the same, but to always think about the good times as they get us through the bad. I thought about that particular conversation right after Keith died.

"Whenever anyone asked me about Keith Emerson, I always said he was the gentleman Statesman of the industry. He constantly encouraged others to play music that makes them happy. He was an amazing individual who never had a bad word to say about anyone, was the first to make a joke, and never really accepted the fact he was the best of the best. I will miss Keith as the world lost a truly gifted musician, who was a compassionate and caring man. Some of us lost an amazing friend who cannot be replaced."

Emerson on the Hammond L100

BRIAN G. WILSON

"I think he knew that wherever he took the music, we'd be right there with him, and that confidence freed him up to be as crazy as he wanted to be."
—DAVE KILMINSTER

DAVE KILMINSTER
(GUITARIST: KEITH EMERSON BAND, ROGER WATERS)

"My times playing with The Keith Emerson Band are undoubtedly some of my favorite moments, musical or otherwise. Sometimes during a gig (for example, after singing the 'Stones of Years' part of 'Tarkus') I would just lay out and listen to the incredible interplay going on. Keith was totally fearless on stage, never afraid to take chances, and his improvisational skills were second to none. Sometimes he'd just stretch out and take a piece of music in a totally different direction, or start re-harmonizing the chord progression: He was always creating and constantly trying new ideas. I think he knew that wherever he took the music, we'd be right there with him, and that confidence freed him up to be as crazy as he wanted to be.

"He also loved our little musical "battles"; those Jeff Beck/Jan Hammer-type exchanges we had were some of my highlights of the live shows. Occasionally we'd just abandon musical phrases and have silly conversations by trying to sound like the The Clangers (a British children's TV series in the '70s) or just resort to making stupid noises at each other. He had such a wonderful sense of humor.

"The last time Keith and I played together was in 2009. Keith called me up out of the blue and told me that his mother had just passed away. He asked me to play with him at her funeral, so the two of us (along with a string quartet) played a new piece that Keith had written. Even though it was a very sad occasion, it was such a joy to play together again. Keith last called me in January 2016, asking if I was up for doing some duo gigs later this year, and I so wish we could still do that. Apart from being a musical genius, Keith had such a warm spirit and a beautiful soul, and I'll miss him more than I can ever express in words."

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DOMINICK MILANO
(FORMER EDITOR, *KEYBOARD* MAGAZINE)

"Keith's long relationship with *Keyboard* started in 1977. *Works Vol. 1* had just come out and (pinch me) I was invited to spend a week with Keith in Montreal. ELP were prepping for a tour complete with a full orchestra. When I got there, the orchestra hadn't joined the band for rehearsals, so I got to stand a few feet from Keith while my favorite trio ran through 'Fanfare' 'Pirates,' 'Tarkus'…

"During breaks, Keith would sit at the Steinway in a flimsy plastic chair—the kind you find in cafeterias—and play barrelhouse blues and jazz. He wasn't practicing and he wasn't showing off. He was just playing for the sheer joy of it.

"I was surprised at how low he sat relative to the keyboard. Not quite as low as, say, Glenn Gould would've sat, but Keith sat much lower than I expected. Another aspect of his technique that struck me was how Keith held his elbows out and away from his body, so he was playing from his fingers—a position he admitted was causing him trouble; repetitive stress injury trouble. That was my first brush with such injuries. Alas, it wouldn't be the last. We did a feature story some time later [April 1994] on carpal tunnel and other ills that can befall a keyboardist. The story was inspired in large part by Keith's experiences.

"I don't remember how much tape we burned through doing that first *Keyboard* interview, but I remember talking during nearly every moment he was free. For example, when we were riding in the back seat of a car on the way to the hockey rink where ELP was rehearsing, walking around his keyboard rig, sitting someplace quiet, flying to New York City together while he picked out a Steinway for the Works tour.

"ELP were one of the most popular bands in the world at the time, so it wasn't surprising one of the guards at the border crossing recognized the name on Keith's passport. 'Keith… as in Emerson, Lake & Palmer?' Keith nodded shyly and graciously thanked the guy, taking his fame in stride, but not wearing it on his sleeve.

"I took for granted how willing Keith was to talk about anything I asked, and I asked everything I'd been wondering about since I first heard him with the Nice in the late '60s: Drawbar settings, what and who inspired him, why he jettisoned his massive Leslie/Hiwatt setup in favor of a single, miked 122 and a DI feed, and a zillion other questions. When I wondered if 'The Three Fates,' like 'The Barbarian' and 'Knife Edge' was an adaptation of something classical, the look on his face made me think of a kid who'd been caught with his hand in the cookie jar. He answered earnestly, 'No,' paused to think, and then asked, 'Why? Does it remind you of something?'

"In late February 2016, I was sitting at my computer when the phone rang. 'Dominick. It's Keith … as in Emerson.' Ever the gentleman, he called because he'd spent the day doing interviews, but the next one was about something he'd heard I was researching. He didn't want to help anyone who was competing with me. Flattered by the unexpected loyalty, I thanked him and said he should do the interview, which was about his relationship with a mutual friend, Bob Moog.

"Three weeks later, my favorite organist was gone. His impact on my life and the lives of so many keyboard players is immeasurable. He left us too soon, but he left us with so much."

TONY ORTIZ
(FRIEND, ARCHIVIST FOR ELP)

"One time after a show, I brought my motorcycle back to the hotel. I had it on the kickstand running, and Keith sat on it so I could take a photo. Then I sat behind him for a photo, and he took off for a quick ride around the parking lot with me on the back. The next day backstage, Greg gave me a 15-minute lecture on how the tour could have been canceled lf he had gotten hurt. I walked out of his room and Keith was standing there with a huge grin on his face.

"To explain what type of person Keith was is easy, he sent me a gift on *his* birthday. When I told Keith I had ALS, he said, "you have to go to Switzerland they have great doctors." I told him there is no cure and it's terminal. I could see on his face he was very concerned. He would call me every so often to see how I was. One time I told him I was nervous about how I was going to die and he told me something that still helps me till this day. 'F—k it man, life itself is a terminal illness!'

"The best time I ever had was at ELP's last show at the High Voltage Festival in London on July 25,

Emerson with friend and ELP archivist, Tony Ortiz

EMERSON IN OUR PAGES

The maestro's mug made the cover of *Contemporary Keyboard* and *Keyboard* eight times, with aspects of his work covered in several more issues. In the coming months we will post these online, but if you're a die-hard collector, the original print versions can be found through eBay and other online sources at reasonable prices.

October '77: An Exclusive Interview
September '80: Rock's Multi-Keyboard King—Then & Now
September '82: "Karn Evil 9, Third Impression" transcription
February '84: "Lucky Man" solo transcription
July '86: The Phoenix Rises from the Ashes of Progressive Rock
April '88: The Return of the King
August '88: Emerson's Concerto Cadenza transcrition
August '89: Howard Jones/Keith Emerson: Superstar Summit
June '92: ELP —the Reunion No One Expected
July '93: Emerson's 1993 Rig
April '94: Will Emerson Ever Play Again?
October '95: The Trials and Triumphs of Rock's Greatest Keyboardist
December '10: The Legend Answers Your Questions
June '13: 5 More Ways to Play Like Keith Emerson

2010. A friend of mine and I got them a cake with figures of them playing their instruments. They loved it. All four of us stood behind the cake for a photo, which would become the last photo of them all together. I knew they would never play again, and my eyes got a little watery. Thank you Keith for raising the bar to an untouchable level."

CJ VANSTON
(FILM COMPOSER, PRODUCER, KEYBOARDIST)

"It was backstage at Royal Albert Hall in 1992. We [Spinal Tap] were all getting spandexed up for our show when the manager came in and said, 'Some keyboard player wants to sit in.' I asked if she had gotten their name. 'Ummm…Keith something.' I froze. 'K…Keith Em…Emerson?' I asked warily. 'Yeah, that's it,' the manager replied unknowingly. I braced myself, and five minutes later in walked *the man*, looking like James f—king Bond. Little did I know, but that was the beginning of what would become a long friendship.

Keith and CJ Vanton testing knives before a show.

"His almost childlike sense of wacky humor jibed with my Dennis the Menace-like attitude. Somehow I discovered that Keith was into airplanes. Well, I've been an aviation buff since I was a kid. We started talking about planes, and the stories of the brave pilots that flew the Spitfires and P-51s, and I saw another side of Keith.

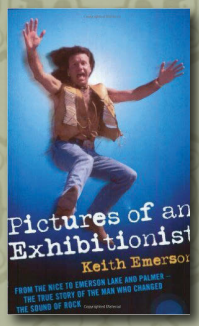
"It got deeper. One time I visited him at a studio and I started playing 'Strange Meadowlark' by Dave Brubeck. Suddenly he came sprinting around the corner yelling 'That's Brubeck!' Yep, both huge fans. We also loved the songs and the stories of Jimmy Van Heusen. Jimmy was secretly a test pilot for Lockheed, by the way. I used to leave Keith messages late at night, playing different Van Heusen songs like 'Darn That Dream.' He loved that stuff.

"We even shared a little fetish for writing pencils and erasers. We both carried pencil boxes with different drafting and drawing pencils for writing charts/scores/notes. One of his erasers was in the shape of an ear. It was his *ear-aser*. Says it all.

"The kicker for me was reading his book, *Pictures of an Exhibitionist*. This amazing man, on top of being the god of the keyboards and one of the greatest composers of the last 100 years, could write his ass off! His book has a beautiful arc to it, like a great composition. I called and told him 'I read your book…and I hate you! You're good at *everything*!'

"The juxtaposition of the most fearsome keyboard player and showman ever to strike the keys, combined with the incredible thousand-year-old yet futuristic (and underrated) composer that he was, was perfectly balanced by his impish sense of humor and love of laughter. That's who Keith was to me. And I think that balance is a huge part of why he was one of the most incredible musicians who ever lived. He *lived* life. As he wrote to me on his 66th birthday: '66…er…99…66…99…still on the spinning piano of life….'" ♫

KEITH EMERSON DOCUMENTARY: *PICTURES OF AN EXHIBITIONIST*



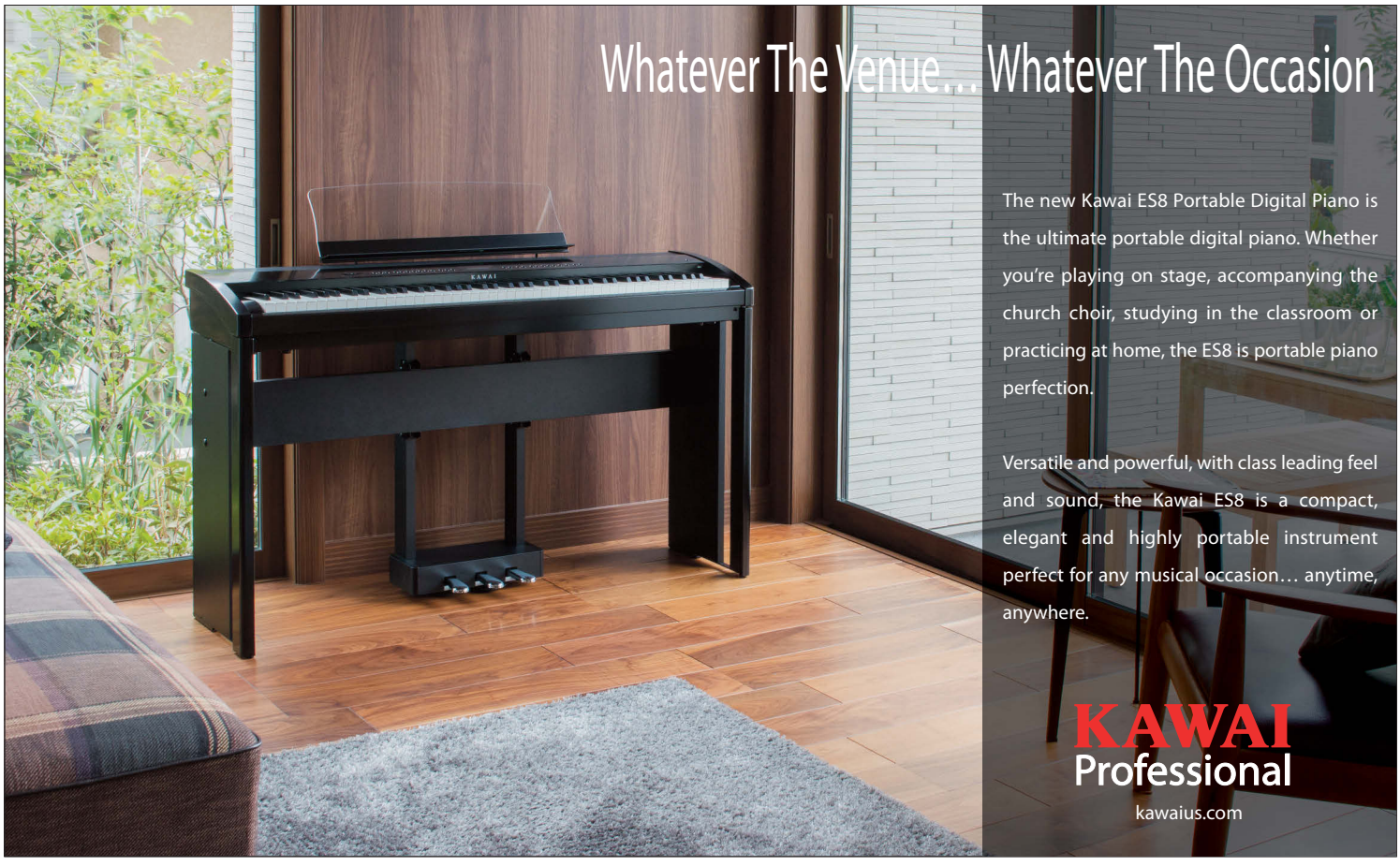
The father-and-son team David and Jason Woodford have been working for a few years now on a documentary based on, and expanding on, Keith's autobiography *Pictures of an Exhibitionist*. Keith was executive producer for this effort and contributed some never-before-heard music to it, and he planned to score it when completed. The Woodfords have a web campaign to help raise money to complete the film, which takes on a new sense of purpose with Keith's passing.

Contribute to their efforts here: www.indiegogo.com/projects/keith-emerson-doc-pictures-of-an-exhibitionist#/.

SOUNDCLOUD

Hear Keith Emerson and "Skunk" Baxter play "People Are Strange."

keyboardmag.com/june2016



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THE GIRL WHO CRIED CHAMPAGNE

A TOAST TO CARLA BLEY'S 80TH BIRTHDAY

BY AMY C. BEAL | PHOTOS BY © CATERINA DI PERRI / ECM RECORDS

COMPOSER CARLA BLEY MAINTAINS HER STATUS AS an international superstar and an elusive cult figure simultaneously. From the festival stages of Europe to her modest home studio, Bley follows her own tunes wherever they lead her.

On the scene for more than 50 years and turning eighty this May, Bley still composes and records new work. Next month ECM will release a recording with recent compositions for her trio, which includes Andy Sheppard (saxophone) and Steve Swallow (bass). Since I first talked with her in 2009, she has won several international prizes, has been named a Jazz Master by the NEA, and received Honorary Doctorates from the University of Toulouse and the New England Conservatory of Music.

The Carla Bley Trio: Bley at the piano, Steve Swallow on bass, and Andy Sheppard on saxophone.

I recently sat down with Bley in the kitchen at her and Steve Swallow's home in Willow, New York, to talk about her new album, touring, and her feelings about turning eighty.

How do you feel about turning eighty?

I'm proud. I didn't ever want to acknowledge a birthday before now because it wasn't as . . . monumental. It wasn't glamorous. I think turning eighty is very glamorous. I would like to think that it would be shocking to people to know that this is what eighty is like. Except for the fact that I recently fell off a ladder and I have to use a cane, so I look a little more like eighty than I did a couple of months ago.

But, in turning eighty, I actually feel quite lucky. Just where I live makes me feel lucky. And the fact that I have a partner who forces me to write music, who constantly says if I'm not up there at the piano, he's going to get a chain and lock me to it!

What I could do if I wasn't constantly writing? I know what I would do: I would learn to be a better player. I now practice every day, but it's only for about thirty minutes; usually it's the Brahms piano exercises, which I think are so beautiful. I don't mind playing them again and again. Sometimes after I practice, I still hear them in my head. I recommend them to everyone.

Do you think of your "player self" and your "composer self" as different people?

Now I think they are integrated. I used to think they were completely different. But I think when I take a solo, I sound like the piece I'm writing. And that's something that I appreciate in other people: A musician who plays the tune, instead of just turning on the switch and playing whatever that person is interested in at that moment. That would not be the case if I had Charlie Parker in my band: I wouldn't even want him to play the tune, I would just want to hear what he was working on.

But the regular humans, I appreciate when they say "Oh, this is a tune built on the cycle of fifths, so I'm going to play off of that." Or "This is a tune that brings back the Roaring Twenties or the Roaring Thirties, so I should play more back . . . taking from history." That's not something I ask people to do, but if they do it, I appreciate it. And so I do it to myself, and I say play the tune, just play the

tune. And then I say if I could just play the tune, I wouldn't have to be a writer. I have to work on it because I can't play quickly. I can't think of things that please me. So I will take a solo and more often than not, I'll reach a place where I say "that's not working." But I learned from other musicians that that's a wonderful place, a place to get to, where you're going to do something totally unexpected and make something out of it. Maybe you made a mistake and you played an *F*♯ instead of an *F*, so that means that's a wonderful thing to do, and you can just keep doing that, play around with that.

I had a trombone player, Gary Valente, and for many years he would play one note during his whole solo. I would say: okay but when he gets to that thirteenth bar, he's going to have to change from a *C*♯ to a *C*! It's not in the chord! And he wouldn't do it! He would keep on that *C*♯ and it made me so happy! Something that pleases me would be something that surprises me. I can be horrified, but I can be mostly pleased when someone plays something where I say, "Why didn't I think of that? I'm glad that person is playing!"

I might as well say Andy [Sheppard] right now. Andy is my band. Steve is always with me, in every band, so I get to be surprised by Steve before the tune is played in public. We're playing downstairs a lot, just the two of us. We play the tune like the rhythm section, to get it ready for the soloist, although we solo too, but.... Andy's really our crowning glory.

But the integration of player and composer used to be totally different. Because I wasn't a player, until I had to be. I was just a writer and wanted to only write, and everybody would try to get me to tour and then I would and I would say, "Oh this is awful, I *can't* play the piano! How can I possibly get paid for this performance? I should pay the audience!" But people would say, "Well, they want to hear the tunes, just play your tunes; people don't listen to your solos anyway!" But I thought: I'm listening to them, and I'm not happy with them. But then finally, it got to the point, as often . . . something bad that happens can turn into something really good. The really bad thing that happened was people not buying albums. When that happened to me, I lost my source of income. And without playing, I would not have been able to be a musician anymore. That made me into a piano player—someone who has to learn, someone who has to practice.

Why do you love writing for the trio?

I don't love writing for the trio! I want to write for a big band. I *have* to write for the trio. So I said, okay, that's the reality. I can tour with three people. I can't tour even with my favorite drummer. Three is the most I can do, and pay the guys I'm touring with well. Otherwise I have to say, you know, it's on the cheap, times are bad; and I don't want to say that. So I only have a trio. So this has been.... I think I've only worked with trio for—how many years now? Well, I still worked with Charlie Haden. The Liberation Music Orchestra has made a new record and will have a concert in Chicago on Labor Day. We made the record already, with new tunes, and a new tune I wrote for Charlie after he died, and a couple I wrote before he died, and a couple I wrote thirty years ago that go with the theme of the album. It's an environmental theme. Because that's what Charlie was most interested in at the end. He's on two of the tunes.

Why do you think you work so much more in Europe than in the U.S.?

We're not playing in the States at all anymore, even if it's only a trio. We don't exist. But there's a lot of history of Europeans preferring the Americans in jazz. The Americans really have the cache that gets them the gigs in Europe. This June my piece for big band and boy's choir is being performed and recorded. It was performed before, at the Moers Festival [Germany]. After that I thought it would get recorded but we just couldn't get it together. A Swedish big band said they could do it but they couldn't do it. The boys' choir just isn't a tradition in Sweden as it is in Germany. I need a *German* boy's choir. I tried a bunch of radio stations, and nobody bit; except, finally, the NDR [Norddeutscher Rundfunk] bit. It's the NDR Big Band, plus the boy's choir from a choral academy in Hamburg.

I wrote the text for the piece myself. It's about learning French. And it's called *La Leçon Française*. I helped myself learn French by writing an opera in French. It's half in French. The other part is learning, in English, it's about students. It's a day in the life of English speaking students learning French. But you know in opera—it's not an opera, it's an oratorio, an oratorio for big band and boy's choir! I originally planned it with Rebecca Martin as the teacher but I can't afford her. I can't afford anyone!

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It's ironic that you've been named the NEA Jazz Master.

Yeah. The even paid me to play one six-minute song at the celebration, "Ups and Downs." And it turned out really good. I practiced for months, my piano part, and we played it in the basement for months, and I finally got to the point where I could play a decent solo on it. And my solo during the performance, I lucked out, man! My solo just killed. One chorus. Killed it! I played it as if I'd spent months writing it! And I didn't, I made it up on the spot! But you see how hard I have to prepare? It's because I wasn't raised a player. I mean, I wasn't raised anything, I raised myself. And if I had known that I would be a player, I would have done what everyone else did and gone to Berklee [School of Music] or something. Learned to play! I never learned!

The last time we talked you told me that you had gotten more conservative, musically, that when you were younger you did a lot of experimental things and really radical recordings, and that as you got older you wanted more and more to write traditional jazz. Is that still true?

I know that I *had* been saying that. But I don't think it was *ever* that I wanted to be anything, I just was what I was. I would have loved to play like Bud Powell. I couldn't, so I didn't want to. I think I was just protecting myself. I still want to play like a great piano player would play. I want to play like Keith Jarrett. I think maybe he's the greatest improviser in general, not only in jazz, but in general improvisation. I can't believe it, that that's coming out of him in an improvised way. Or if I could play, like, say, Larry Willis—I'm thinking of all the piano players with an incredible touch. Larry Willis is a totally great piano player.

But also, Ornette Coleman was such an influence. My solo piano pieces, "Romantic Notions," have been recorded but haven't been released. There are two or three pieces in there where Ornette Coleman was a direct inspiration. I recorded them; they're perfect. But there are certain things that everyone who plays them does wrong. They've been played by a lot of people, and sometimes totally wrong: Too much expression. I don't like expression.

Let's talk about the pieces on your new recording, *Andando el Tiempo*. There's some heavy subject matter that you describe in your notes for the CD booklet. Can you talk about that a little bit? What do the titles of the three-part title piece mean?

"Sin Fin" means "Without Ending." Then the middle one was a William Safire title. "Potación de Guaya" was a potion of grief. It's very ancient Spanish. It means "Drink of Grief." And the word "drink" was crucial. We should say, first, that the piece "Andando el Tiempo" is about being addicted to something. And I don't mean music. I mean one of the things that makes you feel happy when you're sad, or high when you're low; it's about being addicted. And a friend of mine had that happen and I watched the whole thing, and it was on my mind, I felt so sad.

Sometimes when I'm really sad I write a piece of music, because it helps. And this helped a lot. This helped while it was going on. The third one was the hardest one, "Camino al Volver," which means "Road Back to the Beginning." Go back to the beginning. And I meant it that the person went back to who he was before what happened to him happened. And to me that's the beautiful happy ending. The overarching title, *Andando el Tiempo* means passage of time, passing of time.

Do you have any advice for young composers today? What advice would you give to one of my students who wanted to be a composer?

I would say: Good luck! And with the expression in my voice, I meant it: Good luck! I would say to young composers there's nothing you can do about it, you have to write music, and … oh man, *lo siento mucho*. You could have been a dentist, for god sakes!

Is there anything musically happening in the world today that you keep track of—new groups, composers, styles—anything that you're really into?

Well, we like Rihanna. She's sort of like the Ornette Coleman of the pop world. She's not following. She's got her own drummer going in her head, and a lot of great drummers around her too. But they're all sort of walking without a crutch. It's really interesting. Personally, I *adore* Lady Gaga. I adore everything she has ever done. I want to play the organ like she does with one foot up on the stool. I adore her!

You told me before that when you go down south for the winter you always take something to listen to, some complete something-or-other. What did you listen to this winter?

Gordon Beeferman! We think he's really wonderful, talented; a great young pianist, organist, and composer. We can really relate to what he's doing. But one year it was Beethoven, one year it was Shostakovich, one year it was [Charles] Wuorinen. To me, his piece "Blue Bamboula" with Garrick Ohlsson playing it, it's the best piece of piano music in the world. But it has to be Garrick Ohlsson. And from the first note you know who the composer is and you know who the piano player is. And there are very few people that; well, you know when it's Ornette Coleman, immediately. You know when it's Bird immediately. You know it's Horace Silver, or anything by the Count Basie band, and Count Basie's playing; certainly as a pianist, for me, very, very, very influential. And the

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other pianists: Of course Thelonious Monk, from the first time I heard him when I was seventeen.

Was Thelonious Monk a big influence on your piano playing or your composing?

Big influence on everything. And Ornette, like you said; because I worked in jazz clubs, for maybe three years, at that age where you take in music and it becomes your favorite music for the rest of your life. But of course, Miles Davis is the greatest player—musically, in any vernacular, in any format, in anything. Miles Davis is maybe the greatest musician that ever lived. Because to me, the improvising is just the miracle; that jazz exists is such a miracle. How could that happen? How did something like Ornette Coleman exist? How did Charlie Parker become Charlie Parker? Where did *that* come from? You can trace that back and there's *nothing* like him.

For me, it's the magic of not knowing what's right or wrong; that is the part of the magic that I have access to. I don't know what's right or wrong. I still ask Steve everything.

What about other pianists?

Since I play piano, I'm so critical. I can find something wrong with the best piano players on earth. I just don't like the way they played that phrase. I just don't like the expression. That's why I like Keith Jarrett because of the way he plays Shostakovich. You can tell that he knows how to play Shostakovich. It's like walking. It's like a lot of trained classical piano players walk funny. They walk like a ballet dancer [gestures]. Why would you want to walk like that? You're not going to get anywhere that way. And they do things, little expressions, I can do it right now as a joke. Why not walk like you walk down the street? Why not walk like you're living in the hood somewhere? There's some walking going on there! Or why not walk like Monty Python's silly walks? But to do ballet, it doesn't make any sense to me. I don't enjoy it.

But Garrick Ohlsson, in general, I just really like the way he plays. He really socks it to you. And I really like Richard Goode for Beethoven; he plays; he works up a sweat. He plays really down to earth. The way Horace Silver plays can't even be imitated. It is so full of blood. It's just life itself. It's the blood pumping through him as he plays; I can't believe how life-full it is—Horace Silver. But only for about five years, his first five. Or Milt Jackson, his touch, his phrasing, I'm fussy about phrasing. But I'm trying to think about piano. Steve loves the guys that I hate, and sometimes sneaks one on me. And I just say, "ugh!" And I just try to bear with it. He just loves really classical piano playing. And I just like sort of the modern guys.

Is there anything you would have done differently in your career, given what you know today?

I think I've said it already. I would have practiced the piano and realized that playing the piano is not something you do to the best of your abilities. Playing the piano is something where you have to pursue your level of ability for miles and miles before you are of any use to anyone else.

Last question: When Steve makes you go upstairs to compose tomorrow morning, what will you work on?

I have no idea. Do you realize that? Is that an opportunity or what? It's an opportunity, and it will be horrible. It will be frightening. I know I can never write another piece. Ever. ♫

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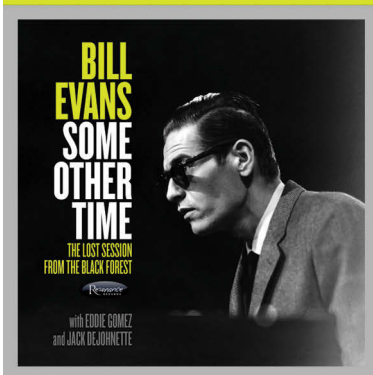

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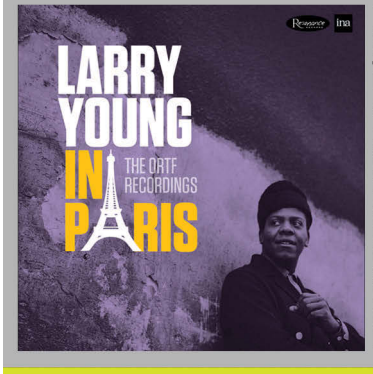

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TORTOISE AND THE MAKING OF *THE CATASTROPHIST*

BY OWEN O'MALLEY

AS ANYONE FOLLOWING THE 2016 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CYCLE WILL tell you, democracy can be scary. But it can also yield wondrous and beautiful results. Take, for instance, the relative peace and comfort democratic nations of the world enjoy in these modern times. Or, as another instance, take the new album from Tortoise, *The Catastrophist*.

In conversation with John McEntire—founding drummer/keyboardist and engineer of Tortoise's studio releases—the democratic nature of his band, and how that nature affects the band's output becomes readily apparent. "Our process is strange," says McEntire, sitting in the control room of the new Soma Studios, where the album was mixed. "Everyone has an equal voice in how we should proceed, which tends to make things take a bit longer. But it's interesting because we always drive at someplace that was totally unforeseen." This ethos has yielded a celebrated collection of diverse, adventurous, and famously description-resistant music (the near-meaningless term "Post-Rock" was invented for Tortoise by head-scratching music critics). This collaborative atmosphere extended to every part of the production process for *The Catastrophist*, including mix-down. "In the actual working process, I'm running the board, but the other guys are all super involved."

All this high-functioning egalitarianism becomes even more impressive when you consider the fact that not all bandmembers were living in the same city during the production of *The Catastrophist*; guitarist Jeff Parker and drummer/keyboardist John Herndon relocated to Los Angeles in the seven years since Tortoise's last release, 2009's *Beacons of Ancestorship*. That goes double when you consider—and at this point it's hard not to start thinking of the new album's title as having some deeper meaning—McEntire moved his entire studio out of the space it had inhabited for the previous 15 years and into the lower level of his house in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood. "That set us back six months or so just because of that transition," McEntire says. "It was a dead stop."

The transition also meant paring down some of the studio's impressive hardware collection, but McEntire's new digs still house a covetable collection of oddball classic synths, outboard gear, and other unique pieces. Gone is the Trident A-Range mixer that used to be at Soma's core, but in its stead is an extremely rare Electrodyne ACC-1204 from circa '68-'69. Soma's current stock of keyed electric instruments is a mix of vintage classics and rare creatures. A small room off the main control space houses a MemoryMoog, ARP Solina, Korg MS-20, Elka Synthex, Oxford OSCar, a Rhodes, a Wurlitzer, and one of the newer, digital Mellotrons (the M4000D). Back in the main control room space lives McEntire's awesome collection of modular gear, including a big Eurorack frame "with many manufacturers represented," an ARP 2600, and a CMS MC-24.

While McEntire curates this collection with obvious care and consideration, he remains gear-agnostic when it comes to production. When asked if any of the compositions on *The Catastrophist* were inspired by any piece of hardware in particular, McEntire's answer is "not really." One track, "Gesceap," was "written on a Lowery Organ, like a weird home organ. . . it influenced the way the piece progressed" but didn't even end up on the final recording (ultimately being replaced by a Farfisa Mini Compact, a Roland C-80, and a Moog Minimoog Model D for the low tones). Though Soma's hardware collection is impressive, McEntire doesn't feel obligated to work outside the box. "I'm certain [SoundToys] Decapitator would have appeared on every song," he mentions, citing also the Sonnox GML EQ and SoundRaddix's Auto Align as plug-ins that get used "daily."

Keyboards and synths were generally recorded direct to allow for liberal experimentation with in-the-box reamping via Line6's AmpFarm plug-in, and MIDI performances captured along with audio whenever possible to allow for further future tweaking. When I mention that the new album struck me as pristine and hi-fi when compared with the previous outing, McEntire assures me it is not by design: "It's never a top-down process; we don't have an end vision of how it's going

ANDREW PAYNTER

OWEN O'MALLEY

to sound. It just kind of emerges."

This open-minded approach to composition and production yields some truly memorable moments and unique textures on *The Catastrophist*. Take, for instance, "Gopher Island," which features a comically fat synth bass, heavily processed acoustic drums, and a run time of 1:33—a track that somehow manages to be both whimsical and menacing. (When I pressed John for the source of that bass tone, his response was "Nobody can remember, sorry!")

By contrast, the aforementioned "Gesceap," which clocks in at 7:37, is a winding, evolving landscape of interwoven organ lines and polyrhythmic guitar and snare counterpoint that threatens to fall apart but somehow never does. "Yonder Blue" sports a dreamy, nostalgic vibe thanks to the clever processing of the drum track—100 percent wet through an EchoPlex clone called The Plex, then nudged forward to align with the rest of the performances. The result perfectly complements the lounge-worthy vocals provided by Yo La Tengo's Georgia Hubley.

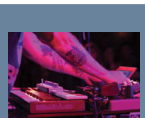
Oh right, this is the first Tortoise album (not counting their collaboration with Bonnie "Prince" Billy, *The Brave and the Bold*) to feature lead vocals—on two tracks. The second is a trippy, tricky cover of David Essex's "Rock On," menacingly sung by U.S. Maple guitarist Todd Rittman. Perhaps what's most surprising about these two tracks is how little they stick out from the rest of the material on the album. It's a feat made possible not only by Tortoise's years of far-reaching experimentation, but also McEntire's clever production touches. Hubley's voice is a dreamy smear awash in a gentle din; Rittman's is hard-panned and doubled, a '70s-rock Cerberus on the prowl, the band his diabolic wingmen.

Yet as pleasing as these diversions are, the longtime Tortoise listener may wonder: Why now? Perhaps a reason for these guest appearances can be found in the instigating event of this newest album. The band was commissioned by the City of Chicago to write music with the intention of inviting musicians from the city's vibrant jazz and improvised music scene to join the band for a performance at Millennium Park. These works were mostly sketches, frameworks for showcasing the guest players. When it came time to make the new record, the Millennium Park commissions served as a jumping-off point. However, the final, composed tracks on *The Catastrophist* are not a stark document of the live band.

"Everything that we do [during production] tends to be a construction job—there's very little that has four or all five of us playing live at the same time," McEntire explains. This makes taking Tortoise songs on the road yet another challenge the band throws its collectivist energies at. "When we do get ready to prepare for a tour, it's a bit of reverse engineering; people may have played certain parts on the record but end up playing something entirely different live. It takes a few weeks to figure out."

At *the Catastrophist* release show in Chicago's new Thalia Hall, the band was a participatory democracy in miniature, going so far as to build a temporary stage in the middle of the otherwise traditional venue's general admission section (the show was billed as "Tortoise in the Round"). McEntire, Herndon, and drummer/keyboardist/percussionist Dan Bitney rotated between two drum kits and four keyboard stations. A laptop—a "hackintosh" running Reason 4—sat near center stage, controlled by a CME keyboard controller and a Kenton Killamix knob controller. Additional textures and samples were triggered by a Marimba Lumina, which nearly every member of the band got a turn at whacking, sometimes concurrently. Guitarist Parker stepped away from his guitar for a song to put some time in on the vibraphone, and bassist Doug McCombs manned a MicroKorg after handing his bass off to Herndon.

There is no apparent power-center in the Tortoise stage plot, no identifiable performance hierarchy, and yet as the band moved from robo-funk to trip-hop to acid-jazz, there was always a sense of effortless cohesion and unified intent. A lesson to be applied, come what catastrophes may. ♫



VIDEO: Watch Tortoise perform live at Chicago's Thalia Hall.

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5 WAYS TO PLAY LIKE Robert Glasper

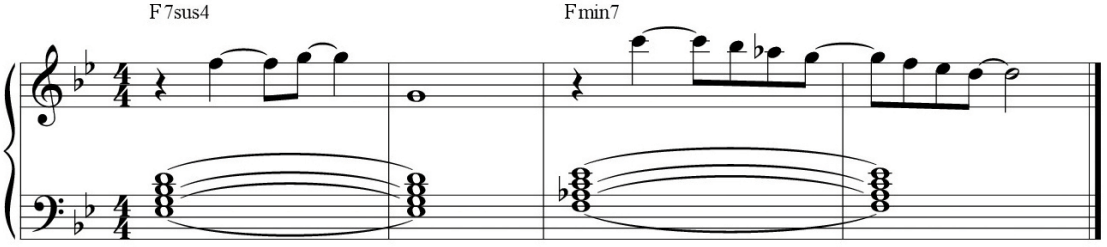
BY BRIAN CHARETTE

HAILING FROM HOUSTON, TEXAS, JAZZ PIANIST AND COMPOSER ROBERT Glasper burst onto the music scene in 2005 and was quickly signed to Blue Note Records. His Robert Glasper Experiment albums *Black Radio* and *Black Radio 2* albums—marrying jazz, hip-hop and groove-oriented music—both won Grammy Awards. His latest Robert Glasper Trio album, *Covered,* delivers acoustic versions of some of his favorite songs. And his latest, *Everything's Beautiful,* re-imagines some Miles Davis tracks. Let's delve into Glasper's unique style.

1. Pedal Points

Ex. 1 is influenced by Glasper's work on the Joni Mitchell song "Barangrill." In the intro, Glasper plays tender melodies over a pedal point that goes from major to minor tonalities. In this example and over an *F* pedal in the bass, we have a root position *E♭* major seventh chord in the left hand. This creates a tidy *F7sus4* voicing when played against the pedal note. The tonality changes to an *F* minor seventh chord in root position in bars 3 and 4. In the right hand, we see notes from the corresponding scales; over the *F7sus4* we use a few notes from the *F* Mixolydian mode (*F, G, A, B♭, C, D, E♭, F*). In Bars 3 and 4 we use notes from the *F* Dorian mode (*F, G, A♭, B♭, C, D, E♭, F*).

Ex. 1

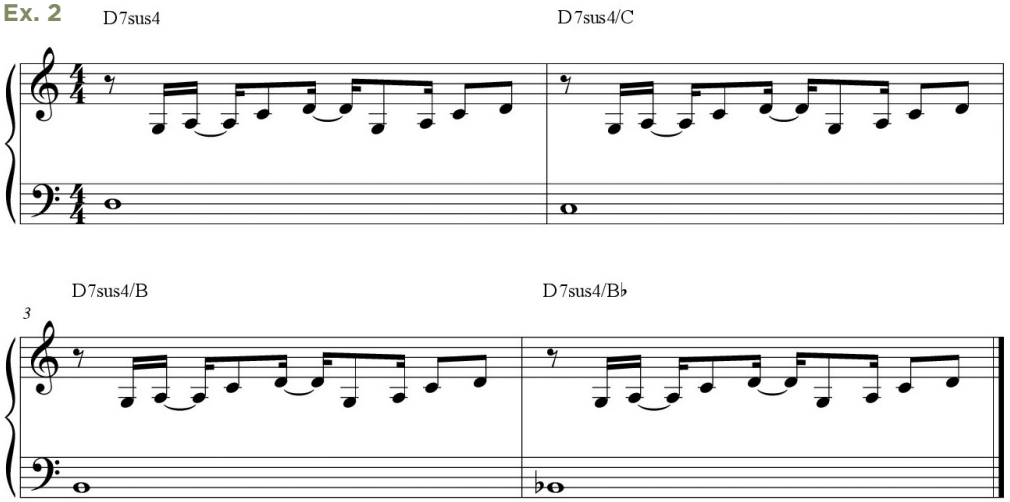


NILS WINTHER

Practice Tip

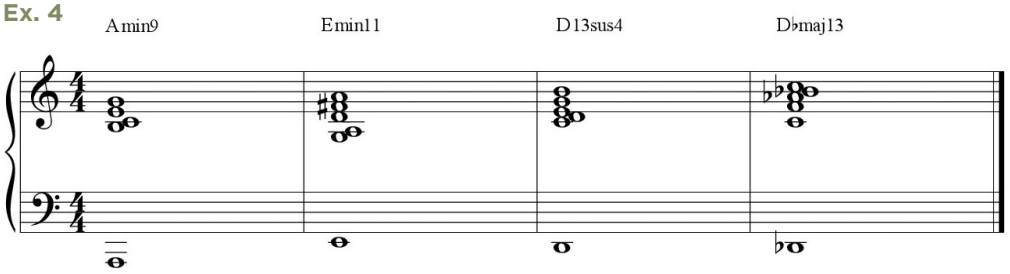
"Try transposing these exercises through all 12 keys and notice how your jazz vocabulary skyrockets," says keyboardist and composer Brian Charette, who has performed and recorded with artists including Joni Mitchell, Michael Bublé, and Rufus Wainwright, in addition to leading his own jazz groups. Charette won *Downbeat* magazine's "Rising Star Organ" award in 2014 and recently released the album *Alphabet City*. He also has a new book out entitled *101 Hammond B-3 Tips: Stuff All the Pros Know and Use*. Find out more at briancharette.com

Ex. 2

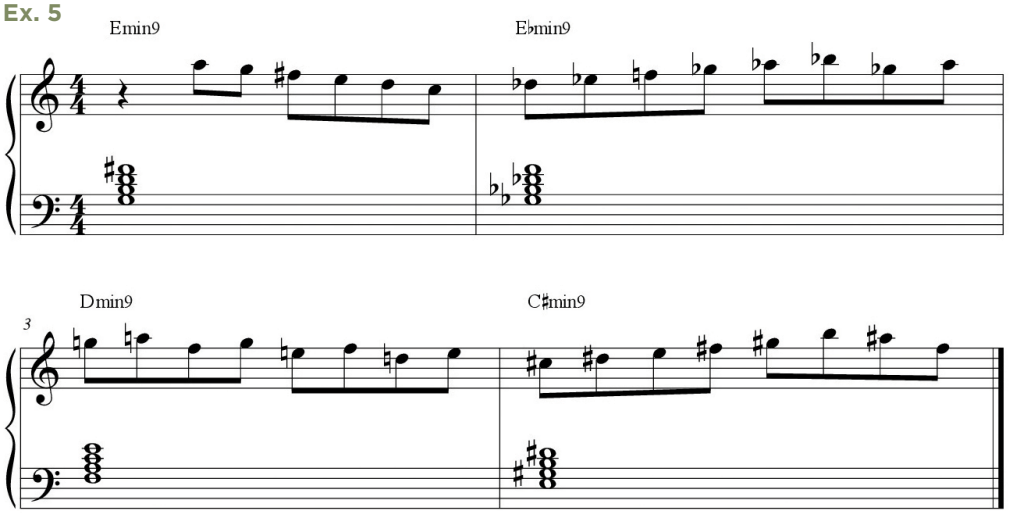


Ex. 3

Ex. 4



Ex. 5



2. Ostinatos & Descending Bass

In **Ex. 2**, we see a right-hand ostinato that repeats over a descending bass line, another technique often used by Glasper. Notice that all of the notes in the right hand come from the *D* Dorian mode (*D*, *E*, *F*, *G*, *A*, *B*, *C*, *D*). Under this line full of syncopated 16th-note subdivisions, a simple whole-note bass line descends. In the last bar, the bass note moves to a note outside of the mode, *B♭*. The notes against this bass create a *B♭* major *13* arpeggio.

3. Moving Triads

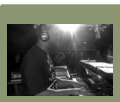
Ex. 3 illustrates Glasper's use of syncopated chords also moving over a descending bass line. Here we are in the tonality of *G* minor, with a bass line that moves down the *G* Dorian mode (*G*, *A*, *B♭*, *C*, *D*, *E*, *F*, *G*) until it goes to a flatted sixth (*E♭*) and arrives at the fifth (*D*). Note that, while bar 1 begins with a *G* minor triad in the right hand, the rest of the right hand chords are all suspended triads such as bar 2's *Dsus*, bar 3's *C9* and bar 4's *Cmin9*.

4. The Sound of Seconds

In **Ex. 4**, we investigate voicings built with the "crunchy" interval of a second. In the first two bars, the lowest two notes of the right hand are made up of second intervals, which create a pleasing crunch that the remaining thirds sit atop to form nicely balanced jazz voicings. Bar 3 has a stock *Amin9* voicing with the addition of the note *D* for a minor 11th sound. This sound imparted by the second interval adds spice to what might be considered an old-fashioned jazz chord. The last bar has the second near the top of the voicing.

5. Eighth Notes and Minor Ninths

Ex. 5 pairs eighth-note lines with descending minor ninth chords, inspired by Glasper's solo on the venerable jazz standard "Stella by Starlight." Note that in the left hand, we are using minor ninth voicings that descend by half steps. The right hand lines are taken right from the respective Dorian mode with the exception of a few chromatic notes. ♫



Watch Robert Glasper play "Barangrill."

Hear Brian play the audio examples from this lesson online.

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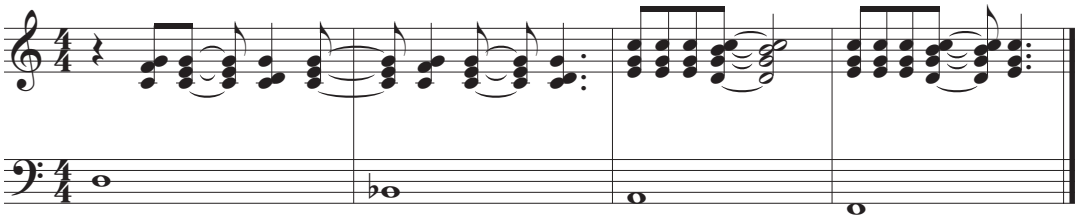
Pop Harmony Master Class

INSIDE THE HARMONIES OF TODD RUNDGREN AND JAMES TAYLOR

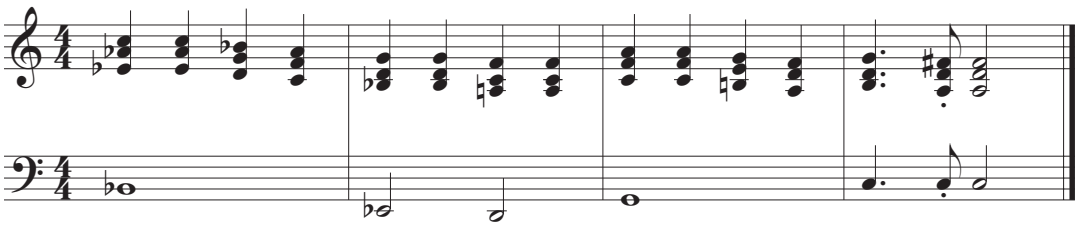
BY JEFF BABKO

SOPHISTICATED AND UNCONVENTIONAL HARMONIES HAVE INFILTRATED THE POP/ROCK GENRE FOR DECADES. PERHAPS most famously explored in the '70s with the soft rock (or "yacht rock") genre, many listeners gravitate toward Steely Dan or Michael McDonald-era Doobie Brothers for hip jazz chords embedded within pop song structures. Two artists who also use an advanced harmonic language almost specific to their individual songwriting styles are Todd Rundgren and James Taylor. It's interesting to note that both musicians are first and foremost guitar players; Rundgren in a more "rock guitar" context, and Taylor with his signature fingerpicking style. But both Rundgren and Taylor also write at the piano, and their piano songs exhibit specific patterns and chordal cadences. When studying each of their vast song catalogs, you'll start to notice common go-to progressions that put their sonic stamps on their piano-driven songs. Let's dig into their signature styles with a few exercises below.

Ex. 1



Ex. 2



1. The Rundgren Pivot

Ex. 1 is an example of what I call the Pivot. We see lots of sus4/third/sus2 triadic movement, plus changing of the bass note to alter the harmony. The fourth chord in bar 3 is a Todd chord for sure, with its signature "crunch" up top.

2. Todd and the King

One thing that Rundgren and Taylor share is the influence of famed songwriter Carole King's piano writing style. **Ex. 2** is a good example of this. Don't be afraid of an occasional major seventh, as seen in the first chord of bar 2. Also note the preponderance of sus chords with resolutions like the first *A♭/B♭* in bar 1 and the *F/G* in bar 3. Another true Toddism is the final resolution, not just to a straight major I chord, but a V/I chord with bonus ii/I after it.

Ex. 3

Ex. 4

Ex. 5

Ex. 6

3. Todd's Harmonic Surprise

Ex. 3 begins with the V/I chord and resolves to the I. We also see pivoting chords again. Note that the third and fourth bars provide interesting surprise resolutions. Rundgren's music often contains harmonic moments like this that keep the listener intrigued and tuned in.

4. The Gospel According to James

Ex. 4 illustrates Taylor's affinity for walking ascending or descending bass notes with gospel-type chords, and diminished chords and resolutions. Note the V/I chord (the second chord in bar 2, and the second chord bar 3). Taylor's cadences are rarely simple ii/V/I progressions, and usually involve polychords.

5. Revealing Resolutions

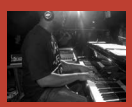
Ex. 5 shows how Taylor often stays away from typical ii/V/I progressions, utilizing sus chords and the V/I chord as a target resolution instead. (This can also be seen in some of Rundgren's examples.)

6. Walking Man Walks

Ex. 6 shows how Taylor descends with a bass line. Try making up your own walking bass lines and finding different flavors of chords to fill out the harmony. Sing a melody that can function as a thread over the top of your harmonic progression, and you'll be surprised what comes out. Remember, neither Rundgren nor Taylor shies away from using major seventh or suspended chords. So explore all of the possibilities available to you.

Practice Tip

"As a certified Rundgren fanatic, I have always been fond of certain signature 'Todd chords.' Even bands like the New Radicals have borrowed from his unique harmonic language. And playing with James Taylor for years has trained my brain to grow accustomed to his unique chord types and progressions," says Jeff Babko, best known for his spot in the house band on *Jimmy Kimmel Live*. (You may have also heard him tickling the ivories in the Will Ferrell/Mark Wahlberg movie *Daddy's Home.*) Babko's latest release, *Crow Nuts*, featuring David Bowie-bassist Tim Lefebvre, is out now. Find out more at jeffbabko.com.



Watch a live performance of Todd Rundgren's "A Dream Goes on Forever."

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Rock Piano
PERSONALITIES

BY ANDY BURTON

Practice Tip

Keyboardist, producer, and composer Andy Burton has toured with artists such as John Mayer, Rufus Wainwright, Curtis Stigers, Ian Hunter, and Robert Plant. Burton currently plays, sings, and arranges soundtrack music for HBO's hit television series *Vinyl*. Find out more at twitter.com/andyburtonmusic.

IN THIS LESSON, WE'RE GOING TO TAKE A LOOK AT FOUR CLASSIC ROCK PIANISTS with highly recognizable piano styles and the ways they incorporate those styles into their songwriting. Each of these artists has such a strong musical identity on the piano that, by taking a fragment of music and developing it pianistically (as they might have done), one can see how they have created a unique musical identity in their songs.

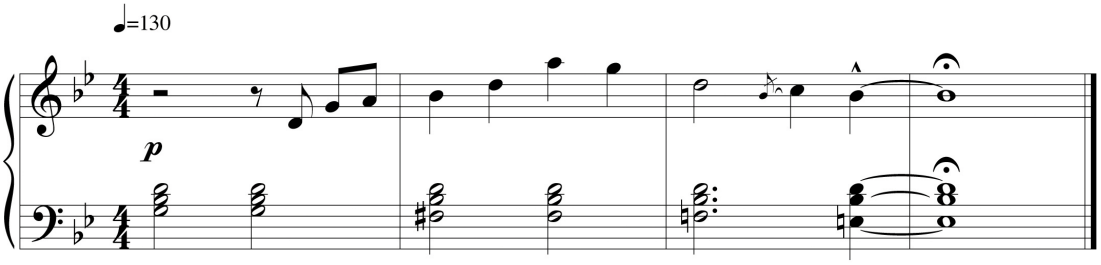
1. Start with a Melody

Ex. 1 is referred to in jazz terminology as a "descending minor line cliché." It's found in many forms of music, from folk to classical to jazz to rock to Broadway. There are myriad opportunities to write a melody that plays off the descending bass line, and with the included minor, minor-major-seventh and minor sixth chords, you've got built-in drama and atmosphere. This is a great starting point for a pianist/composer.

2. Like Billy

Ex. 2 illustrates what Billy Joel might do with this melodic passage. Joel grew up loving Frédéric Chopin, Paul McCartney, and Ray Charles, as well as his slightly older contemporary Elton John. You can clearly hear the influence of Chopin *ballades* in the left-hand accompaniment pattern here, and the melodic phrasing is not unlike the way Sir Paul phrased some of his unforgettable melodies. One can imagine Billy Joel playing something like this fragment as an intro before coming in with his vocal, singing the same melody in the first verse of one of his 1970s ballads. It's almost all "legit" classically derived sonorities until the very last bar, with a little country/R&B-ish piano lick to remind us that what we are listening to is a pop song.

Ex. 1



Ex. 2

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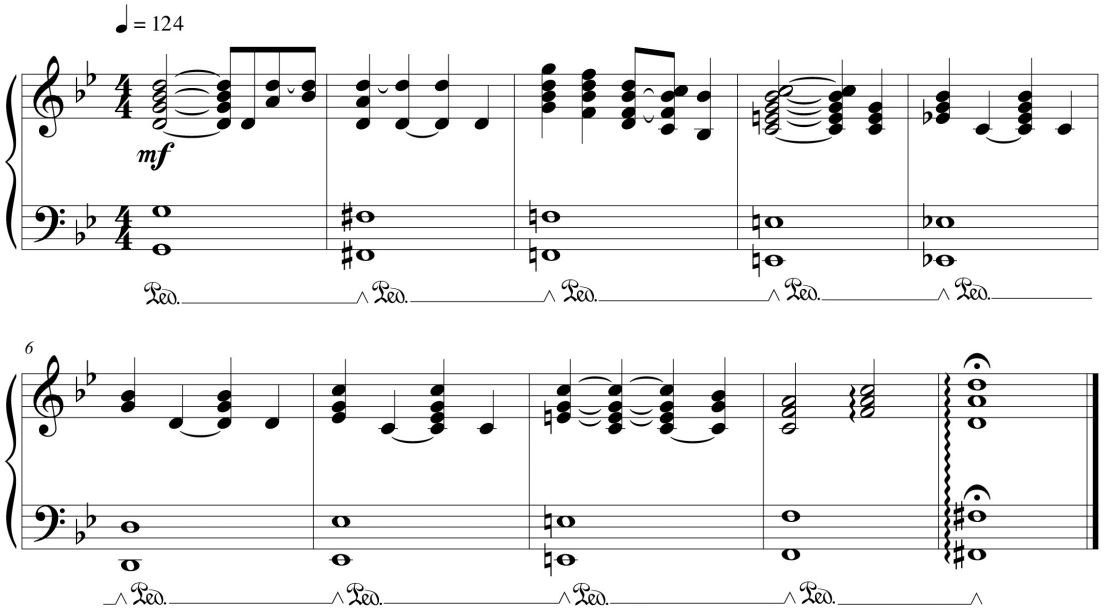
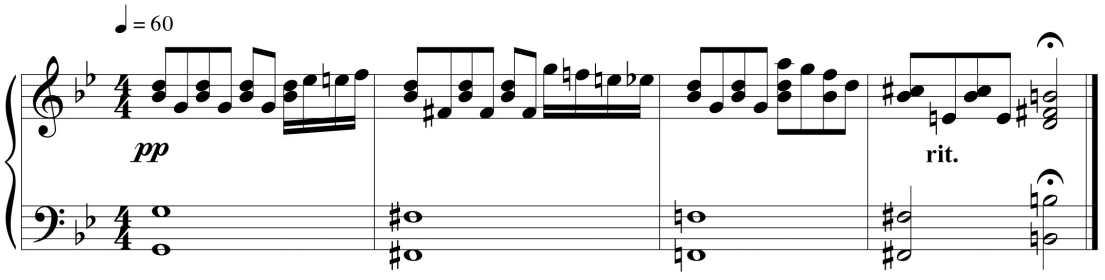
Ex. 3



Ex. 4

Ex. 5



3. Here's Elton

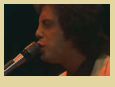
Sir Elton John draws from a similar bag of influences as Billy Joel, such as classical, gospel, R&B, as well as the Beatles and Beach Boys. **Ex. 3** shows how Elton might lean a little heavier than Billy on gospel piano stylings, specifically pentatonic melodies tucked inside thick, rich right-hand chords. The chromatically moving bass line extends the drama and adds extra poignancy; you can find similar harmonic moves in Chopin *ballades* and Beethoven sonatas. Note the almost continuous use of the pedal, making the texture glassy-smooth throughout—a perfect backdrop for Elton's soaring vocal style.

4. Preston Piano

Billy Preston, well-known for his sideman work with Little Richard and the Beatles, had a string of solo hits in the early and mid-'70s (the heyday of the piano-based singer/songwriter). Having come up from the African-American church in his youth, Preston's piano style owes a huge debt to gospel music, seen here in **Ex. 4**. As in the Elton example, you can hear rich right-hand chords containing a syncopated, fast-moving melodic line. Unlike the Elton example, there is a strong, staccato, almost march-like rhythmic pulse throughout, broken up at the end with a powerful syncopated tag (or a gospel cadence). This could also be a song's intro, possibly followed by a verse that provides a similar rhythmic texture under a vocal that is carrying the same melody.

5. The Wright Way

The often-underrated keyboardist Richard Wright was a major factor in Pink Floyd's success, both through his innovative instrumental textures and his often-overlooked compositional prowess. His deceptively simple piano playing drew from a mixture of classical, jazz and R&B influences. In **Ex. 5** you can mostly hear classical and jazz, with a characteristically surprising harmonic modulation at the end. ♫



Billy Joel plays "The Stranger" live at Carnegie Hall

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"I am frankly amazed at most of the styles." "First time I did a song with Band-in-a-Box, I couldn't believe it!" "I use it in the classroom and also in creating music in my studio. It is a fantastic piece of music software to own. I am greatly impressed." "I use Band-in-a-Box regularly. It has improved my musical talents by far and I enjoy it very much. Thanks to all who have helped make this program so fantastic!!!" "The immediate feedback is a first-class learning environment!" "Band-in-a-Box is my best learning tool." "I use Band-in-a-Box all the time. A truly great product." "Excellent quality is a PG Music standard!" "Band-in-a-Box makes it so easy to quickly build an arrangement for composing." "I've used Band-in-a-Box for a year now, and it just gets better with age." "Band-in-a-Box, well, it's just a great program!" "Great software and accessible to everyone who loves music!" "Your Band-in-a-Box is fabulous! Congratulations." 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"Who knew what Coltrane would sound like soloing over country music - LOVE IT!!!" "Band-in-a-Box, well, it's just a great program!" "Wow... So much for ever sleeping again." "Songwriters, this will become your most creative tool." "It is great to have a full band at my beck and call." "Best investment in software I've ever made!!" "Band-in-a-Box is a real treat to use!" "I was absolutely blown away at the quality of Band-in-a-Box when I purchased it and began working with it…the professional staff at PG Music know their product!" "I will recommend Band-in-a-Box to all those out there who have a computer." "I use Band-in-a-Box regularly. It has improved my musical talents by far and I enjoy it very much. Thanks to all who have helped make this program so fantastic!!!" "The audio chord wizard is my favorite feature of Band-in-a-Box." "The RealTracks are fantastic and provide great inspiration for creativity." "I tried with many audio files and the chord detection is amazingly accurate." "Band-in-a-Box is some of the most fun you can have with a computer."

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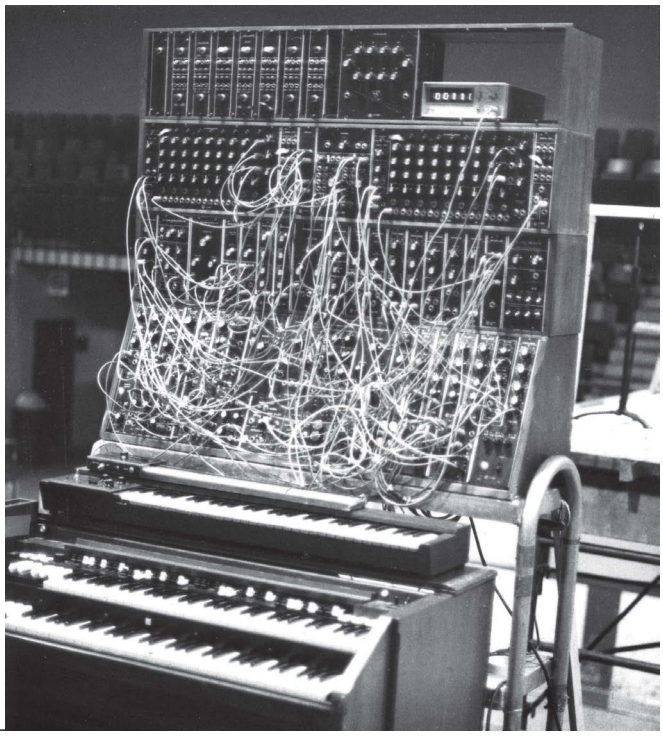


THE ART OF SYNTH SOLOING

Keith Emerson's "Lucky Man" and "Tank" Solos

BY JERRY KOVARSKY

FANS AND READERS OF KEYBOARD ARE SURELY FAMILIAR WITH THE SIGHT OF KEITH EMERSON'S MASSIVE MODULAR Moog. Many of us of a certain vintage can recall how startling it was to hear those massive tones ring out from the first ELP album, and then to see him in concert. Before Keith Emerson did it, bringing a modular synthesizer on the road with a rock band was simply unheard of. Sure, there had been albums before that using the Moog, but many were novelty recordings, especially in the wake of Wendy Carlos' astoundingly musical *Switched-On Bach* series. Others mostly used the Moog for sound effects, although its use by the Beatles and the Monkees predates the first ELP album. Yet it is Keith who carved a space out in rock/popular music for the synthesizer, and we all owe him a debt of gratitude for his bold vision.

The First Recordings

For the casual fan, it was the iconic solo on "Lucky Man" from the first album that captured our attention, likely heard on FM radio. Yet if you listened to the album you would have encountered "Tank," first. The latter half of that tune has a majestic figure that builds up in mixed quartal/tertian harmony (mixed fourths and thirds) before taking off into an extended solo that shows off Keith's chops and wonderful soloing sensibilities. I have transcribed and posted the full solo online (visit keyboardmag.com), as it is too long to fit in these pages.

Which brings us back to "Lucky Man." It is *the* solo that most people think of when they think of Keith Emerson. Keith never cared for it, but it is what we all heard and what drew us into his music so it is only right to acknowledge its importance.

Fig 1. The "Lucky Man" sound as realized using Arturia's Mini V. Note the high resonance and fully open filter cutoff.

A brief historical recap: In 1971 the group was finishing their first album and found themselves a song short. No one had anything to offer, so Greg Lake brought up a song he had written as a young teen and played it for the band. It was vastly different from the rest of the album—almost a folk song—but the band agreed to let him work it up and see what happened. Keith wasn't needed so he was not part of the main production. When the tune was mostly finished it was suggested he try adding a solo to it using his newly acquired Moog modular.

Keith worked up a basic sound on the Moog, and then had them run the tape so he could play along and work out what he wanted to do. Greg and producer Eddy Offord hit Record along with the playback, because you never know what will happen. So Keith played that iconic solo as a warm-up, not consciously thinking it was being recorded. When he finished, he told them he was ready to try a take, and they called him in to listen to what he already done. He was not happy with it, but they convinced him it was a keeper, citing they had no more spare tracks and other reasoning. Keith relented, and here we are today. In our October 1977 interview, we asked Keith about the solo and he said, "I didn't think much of the solo. Honestly, it's a lot of shit. But it was just what he wanted." In fact, Keith never

Ex. 1: The full "Lucky Man" solo

used to play a solo on the song live, until Emerson, Lake and Powell toured in 1986.

The "Lucky Man" Sound

Every synth since the advent of presets has included a sound trying to replicate the "Lucky Man" lead. In general, it's not a hard sound to re-create, but the sheer power and majesty of those analog oscillators can really separate the men from the boys. Consulting with Will Alexander, Keith's tech and production partner for many years, I confirmed that the sound is simply three square waves; two are only slightly detuned, and the third is more detuned and mixed back halfway. My friend and fellow Emerson-enthusiast, Bruce McPherson shared this same tip with me and provided an audio example of the detuning technique using his Moog Voyager, which I have posted online. This way, as you play higher notes you don't hear the rapid beating that too-wide of a detuning will produce. It needs to be fat, but slowly beating.

What many presets get wrong is the amount of filter resonance present in the sound. It is highly resonant—around 80 percent—but with the filter cutoff wide open, so you don't notice it until you have the filter close down slowly.

When I was at Ensoniq, we released a CD-ROM ("SCD-4 Keith Emerson Signature Series") sound library for the EPS-16+ and ASR-10 samplers that Will and Invision Interactive had recorded, with samples from Emerson's modular and Hammond C3. I've posted an audio clip online of the sound, so you have a reference from the source itself.

The Solo

The solo is played over three chords, *A* minor, *E* minor, and *D* major. Keith was sustaining a low *D* during the last vocal part and his entrance is hugely dramatic, swooping up to a higher *D* with portamento, clearly establishing that we were hearing something completely new and different. I always found it interesting how he played a lot of *F* naturals over the *D* major chord, as in bars 2 and 6. And his rhythm and phrasing almost has a jig/folk dance quality to it at times. My transcription differs from what *Keyboard* printed back in the February 1984 issue, first in the notes in bar 6 and then in bar 16. If you don't have the issue, who cares, right?

In bar 24 you first really hear the resonance: Some feel it was added then (meaning the resonance was first turned up to around 80 percent) as opposed to how I describe the sound up top. Anyway, here you should sweep the Filter Cutoff with each note if you wish to sound just like the record.

More to Come

Next month I'll look at a few other classic solos of Keith's and share some other insights into his favorite patches from the modular. ♫

SOUNDCLOUD

Hear examples of the sampled Emerson modular and the 3-oscillator tuning technique for "Lucky Man."

keyboardmag.com/june2016

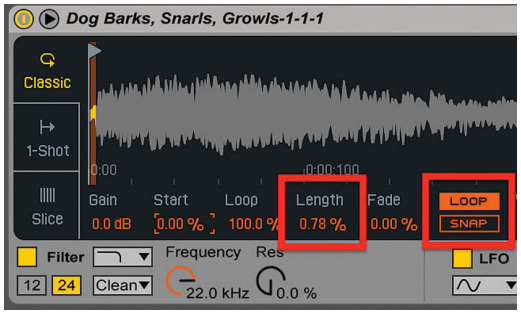
That Synth Is a Dog

CREATING YOUR OWN WAVETABLES

BY FRANCIS PRÈVE

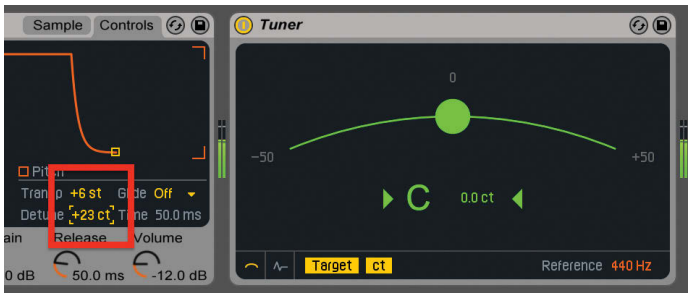
THOUGH MANY KEYBOARDISTS ASSOCIATE WAVETABLE SYNTHESIS WITH EXPENSIVE HARDWARE AND COMPLEX softsynths, creating unique digital waveforms via standard sampling tools is actually quite easy once you understand the basics.

This month, we'll look at a straightforward method for converting almost any type of sample into a rich source of harmonic material, ripe for transforming your own patches, using Ableton Live's Simpler instrument.

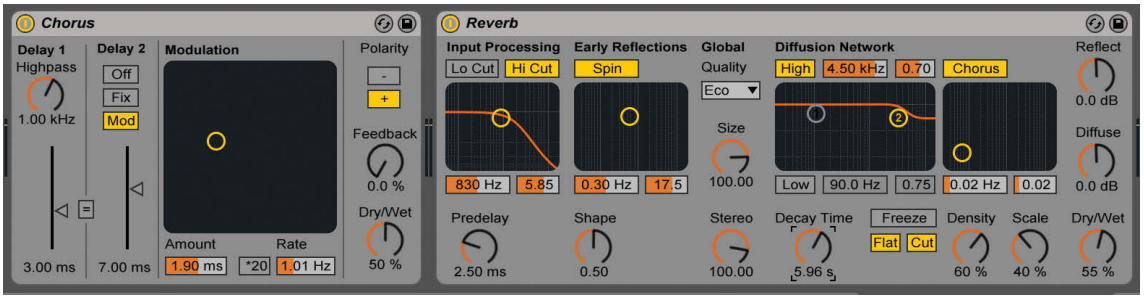


Step 1: Because Simpler's looping tools are set in percentage increments, you'll get the most flexibility when using brief, complex sounds. Animal samples are great for this. So are short sound effects such as gunshots and tires screeching. For this tutorial, I began with a single dog bark.

Step 2: First, you'll want to turn Simpler's warping tools off, so that the loop works in "classic" sampler mode. From there, create an extremely short loop. If you've picked your sample correctly, this will have a lot of harmonic character. Note that if the loop is too short, there won't be much variation as you scan the sample. Too long, and the loop will sound jittery. For my dog bark sample, I set the percentage to 0.78 percent and turned Snap mode off for more flexibility.



Step 3: Creating such short loops with this type of material usually results in a sound that's not tuned properly, so if you plan to use your wavetable with other instruments in a mix, you'll want to make sure that it aligns with the rest of your synths. For this, just add Live's Tuner device to the end of the chain and adjust the semitones and cents parameters accordingly.



Step 4: Scanning the position of the loop is where the real fun begins. With the right combination of sample and loop length, changing the start point of the sample will move the loop through the entire recording, with each position offering a radically different harmonic spectrum. This scanning isn't as smooth as, say, Xfer's Serum or a Walfdorf Blofeld, but it's still a fantastic source of unique waveform data.

Step 5: As with many digital oscillators, even a complex waveform can sound rather static. To make the end result more polished, add some effects, like the tried-and-true workstation classic Chorus, followed by a hall reverb. ♫

SOUNDCLOUD Audio examples.

keyboardmag.com/june2016

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KURZWEIL Forte 7

BY STEPHEN FORTNER

Keyboard K KEYBUY AWARD

BY THE SALES FIGURES, KEYBOARD COMPANIES' MID-SIZE INSTRUMENTS OF 73 or 76 keys are often underachievers compared to their 61s and 88s. That's surprising because anecdotally, a lot of keyboardists who do live gigs, myself included, praise them as the ideal compromise between stretch-out room and portability. With the Forte 7, Kurzweil's flagship instrument arrives in this form factor, while sporting a roster of improvements in the latest OS. Now as then, the Forte goes well beyond its stage piano appearance, combining multiple synthesis methods into a do-it-all combo keyboard that aims to occupy the all-important bottom tier on your keyboard stand. It's so powerful, though, that it could easily get you through any gig occupying the *only* tier.

Snap Judgment

PROS Killer acoustic and electric piano sounds. Drawbar organ mode with Leslie simulation doesn't draw on the main polyphony reserve. A dedicated virtual analog synth for all intents and purposes. Virtual analog, KB3 organ, and "regular" sounds can be combined in multis.

CONS No dedicated buttons for octave shift or arpeggiator. Acoustic and electric guitar sounds are still a weak spot.

Bottom Line

In the same stage combo stratosphere as the Nord Stage 2EX, but does more for less.

$3,495 street
kurzweil.com

What's New

The Forte is a deep instrument with a workstation-class sound set, and it's even deeper as of OS 1.40, which should be preloaded in any new Forte 7. If not, downloading it to a USB stick and updating the unit is nice and quick, and all updates apply to the original (88-key) Forte as well. Since we have room mainly to detail improvements here, please refer to our original review from November 2014 for a thorough overview and evaluation that still stands.

As before, 16 GB of Flash Play memory is where the wave data lives, and all of it is addressable by the sound engine at once with no load time. Eight-velocity-layer acoustic and electric pianos take up much of the room here. Sympathetic string resonance has now been added to the pianos for extra realism. KB3 drawbar organ sounds can live alongside "regular" ones in a multi, and since KB3 runs on its own DSP chip, these don't draw on the Forte's 128 voices of polyphony. In the unlikely event you brush the ceiling, Kurzweil's voice robbing is still the least audible in the industry.

A new Advanced User mode, accessed by a toggle in the Global menu, lets you address up to 16 Multizones (available since OS 1.30) for complex splits and layers, as compared to eight previously. Every part gets an independent arpeggiator, each of which in turn can work in either Classic mode for the expected up-down and note-order-as-played fare, or as a programmable step sequencer with up to 48 steps. User patterns can be saved as their own memory objects. Musically useful options for drum beats, bass lines, and the like are among the 148 arpeggiator presets.

Another boon of Advanced User mode is that you can now edit all VAST parameters from the front panel, accessing pages via the soft buttons as on a PC3 or K-series synth. Kurzweil's VAST has long been one of the deepest synth engines found in hardware, amounting to an almost virtual-modular canvas that lets you configure oscillators, filters, DSP functions, and other sonic building blocks in various chains and provides virtually bottomless modulation routings. For seriously rolling my own sounds I'd still opt for the free Mac/PC editor (iPad version please!) but this access is nice to have when your Forte is away from your computer.

The Fatar action is identical to the original Forte except for its shorter key range. It's decidedly weighted but is quicker under my fingers than most 88s that focus on pianism—a non-fatiguing compromise ideal for the organ and synth sounds you'll no doubt be playing alongside pianos and such. Aftertouch? Yes.

The user interface is generally intuitive, with things being where you'd expect to find them and the color (though not touch) screen momentarily show-

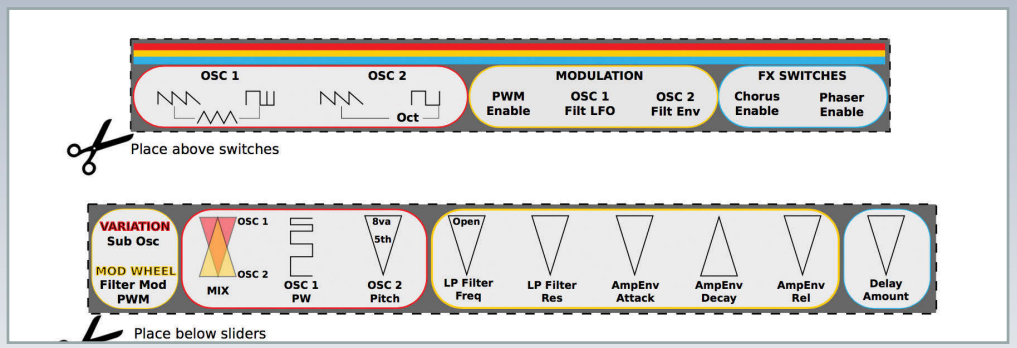

Fig. 1: These cut-outs from the accompanying PDF file for the KVA Patch Kreator, a free download, show how the Forte can become a bona fide virtual-analog synth.

ing a meaningful assignment, not just a MIDI CC, for any control you grab. A couple of nuisances: Octave shifting is still relegated to soft buttons even though there are dedicated transpose buttons—I'd reverse these roles. Moreover, the only top-level (meaning, not in Edit mode) control of the arpeggiator's on/off and latch functions is via the same soft buttons that shift octaves; this is an either-or choice in the Global menu. Fortunately, all arpeggiator settings including on/off status are saved at the Program level.

Playing

The Forte 7 arrived just as I'd completed last month's review of the Yamaha Montage, which is still in my studio. So I was able to take both to a function gig that covered half a century, from '60s Motown to recent Top 40. This isn't meant to be a "shootout" and the two instruments take quite different approaches, but given that the Montage 7 and Forte 7 are neck-and-neck on price, I'll indulge in a little comparison. Keep in mind, these are first impressions of factory sounds that I just flung into the gig.

Acoustic pianos. The Montage's best pianos offered a bit more sparkle and detail where the Forte's delivered more midrange punch and body. Both are in the 99th percentile of piano realism. With all reverb removed and envelope release made as even as possible, the Montage pianos seemed to have slightly longer tails and more room ambience sampled in. But you could play either instrument for a solo piano gig and sonically want for nothing.

Electric pianos and Clavs. Again, we're in that high-percentile realm. The Montage's Rhodes, Wurlies, and Clavs are utterly realistic and respond plenty to aggressive playing, but the Forte's do the same with a bit more dirt and dynamism; there's just a little more of the good kind of trouble to get into as you hit the keys harder.

Tonewheel organs. The Forte certainly has an advantage with its modeled KB3 organ mode, which uses the sliders as drawbars. Its Leslie simulation is good but still not in the league of dedicated drawbar organs such as the Hammond SK series. In terms of the organ tone itself, many Montage presets (which can also map drawbar control to the sliders) had more of the transparency and "air" I prefer in my B-3 sound, compared to the Forte's more compressed, focused character. Its organs are certainly more than good enough to make you think twice about carrying a separate clonewheel to a gig with tight space or load-in time.

Synths. The Forte stands out for its modeled-analog KVA oscillators. This gives it warmth and attitude in this sound category that few all-around combo instruments can boast; the Nord Stage series comes first to mind. Because of VAST, though, KVA programs can be far more complex than anything the Stage 2EX's synth section can do. You can also download a set of KVA starter programs that map the Forte's buttons and sliders to parameters including waveform selection, pulse width, and the usual filter and envelope suspects, resulting in a highly credible "analog synth" playing experience. The accompanying PDF includes cut-out label strips for these settings (see Figure 1). Of course, tons of pads, leads, and chordal comping sounds are on hand outside of the KVA paradigm. The Montage isn't an appropriate comparison here; its synth sounds are consistently excellent, but the addition of Motion Control and a full FM section make it a very different animal.

Orchestral instruments. My comments here are largely unchanged from the original Forte review, which is to say that the strings and brass still comprise some of the most engaging section and solo instruments in the hardware synth world. The brass samples, first found in the Kore64 expansion (reviewed September 2013) are generally newer than the strings, which still excel at cinematic passages and "Ain't No Sunshine"-style ballad arrangements. Nonetheless, some of the Forte's orchestral patches are beginning to show the age of their underlying sample sets.

Guitars and basses. Electric and acoustic guitars, though serviceable, remain an Achilles' heel on Kurzweil instruments, especially in comparison to the stellar piano and keyboard sounds. On the contrary, the acoustic, electric, and synth basses are as dense and creamy as flourless chocolate cake. "Flea/Bootsy," with its envelope wah, and the octave-doubled "Levin/Gabriel" fretless are two funky favorites of mine.

General impressions. For almost ten years, my gig rig when I wasn't playing active review gear was a Motif ES7 on the bottom and a Kurzweil K2661 up top. The Motif sounded more hi-fi and polished, the Kurzweil more raw and in my face. Of course, this comes from actively listening for differences—playing them separately you'd never peg the K2661 as anything less than hi-fi nor the Motif as lacking in aggression when called for. This was exactly true of the Montage-Forte pairing, with each machine sounding proportionally better for being so new.

Conclusions

For gigging keyboardists, the Forte 7 hits a Goldilocks zone of feel, relative compactness, high sound quality, and musical range. This is a *very* high-end, multi-synthesis-method machine that just happens to prioritize kicking pristine piano, nasty Rhodes and B-3, and tweakhead virtual analog—all at the same time if you want.

While my Montage comparisons arose from opportunity, the Forte's more direct competitor in terms of design goals and intended customers is the Nord Stage 2EX. One could debate which sorts of sounds each does best, but it's an objective fact that the Forte is more powerful; there is more multi-timbral implementation, more polyphony, more memory for current and future sounds, and a more sophisticated sample-based and virtual analog synthesis architecture. Factor in that it costs appreciably less and that closes the case for crowning it the current king of stage combos and a Key Buy winner. ♫

Read our review of the original Kurzweil Forte.

keyboardmag.com/june2016

The Roland FP-30, shown here with the KSC-70 stand and KPD-70 pedal assembly that lets you turn pages in compatible sheet-music apps.

ROLAND FP-30

BY RICHARD LEITER

ROLAND PRETTY MUCH INVENTED THE UNDER-A-GRAND, UNDER-30-POUNDS digital piano a quarter-century ago when the manufacturer introduced the EP-7. Semi-weighted and only 76 keys, it was a godsend to the legions of players who simply wanted something small and lightweight for gigs and living rooms. The touch was addictive, and the piano and electric piano sounds, though unsophisticated by today's standards, were highly musical. Roland, as usual, was ahead of the marketplace.

That's why I was so curious to play the new FP-30: It is the latest incarnation of the portable digital-piano concept and Roland's entry in the current under-a-grand, fully weighted, 88-key piano race.

A Clean Machine

The Roland FP-30 is the size of its competitors but weighs in at about five pounds more than the others, lending it a reassuring substantiality. And it has a super-clean design.

Available in black or white, the FP-30 offers many of the features that have become *de rigueur* in this category—layering (called Dual here), split and twin-piano modes, 128-note polyphony, a metronome, a pre-programmed rhythm ma-

Snap Judgment

PROS Emotional, convincing and very playable grand piano sounds with an ergonomically thrilling action that brings out the best in it. Giggable sound array. Bluetooth MIDI connection to music apps.

CONS No visual display. No quarter-inch outputs. No data entry slider or dial. Only three tone category buttons. Many functions and Tone selection requires you press a combination of a button and keyboard note.

Bottom Line

A great-playing, authentic-sounding digital piano.

$699 street
rolandus.com

Fig. 1: To select sounds or choose or change a parameter one level down, select the Tone or Function button and press the corresponding note on the keyboard: The full list is available in the manual.

chine, WAV file playback, USB connectivity, and a (single-track) MIDI recorder with SMF playback capabilities so you can play along with multitrack song files. A pair of built-in 4.75" speakers, each with an 11W amplifier, provides onboard sound. Moreover, the FP-30 sends MIDI over Bluetooth so you no longer need a USB cable or Camera Connection kit to control your favorite music apps.

As far as stands for the FP-30 are concerned, Roland suggests the KSC-70 ($99) or one of their latest x- or z-frame stands. And if you opt for the 3-pedal KPD-70 ($75 street), you can use it to turn pages in compatible sheet-music apps such as Sheet Music Direct and piaScore using a pedal command.

The FP-30's rear panel hosts two USB ports (one for a thumb drive, another for computer connection) and two pedal inputs (1/4" and a multipin jack). For analog audio output, you have your choice of 3.5mm and 1/4" headphone jacks on the front, below the keyboard. Because there are no discrete 1/4" audio jacks, you will need an insert cable to feed the output to a pair of studio monitors or mixer inputs; for example, a cable with a 1/4" TRS plug on one end (for the piano's headphone output) that splits to a pair of 1/4" TS jacks. (A forthcoming update will allow you to use the headphone outs without muting the speakers.)

The Piano Experience

When it comes the FP-30's *raison d'être*, it's the piano sound provided by Roland's SuperNatural engine. It is not a uniformly voiced, perfectly even instrument that you find on the competitor's keyboards; here there are subtle note-to-note variations. And the onboard amplification—heartier than most with speakers that shoot downward—emphasizes lows and mids more than my studio-spoiled ears have come to prefer.

And as I played, I realized that something special was happening. With all its realistic variation in tone, Roland has caught the essence of a fine piano. It feels like one of those big grands that you hear on Keith Jarrett records. In fact, through the built-in speakers, the lows and mids are so rich and, at the same time, precise, that you can voice 1-3-5 triads down around low *C* and hear every tone distinctly.

The high octaves are convincing as well, with a few notes being a little quirky – *G*♯ over middle *C* comes to mind. But I got tremendous enjoyment out of those bottom three octaves. The action is so responsive ("bouncy" in that Roland way) that you can do very funky things. And the richness coming out of the internal speakers supports singers effortlessly—male and female. All in all, the marriage of the ultra-nimble, exquisitely textured keys and this exceptional piano engine make for a satisfying and emotional playing experience.

EPs, Organs, and Other Goodies

If you like Roland electric pianos, you'll enjoy the three choices here—a chimey-Dyno Rhodes, a tiney '80s digital, and a funky Wurly simulation. The FP-30 also includes a very nice pair of jazz organs that will cover most gigs. And it has the bass basics covered—acoustic and finger-style electric—and the usual assortment of guitars, harpsichords, celestes, vibes, and such. I would rather have had a couple more electric pianos than the seven vocal-based patches, but I wouldn't want to lose the velocity-driven Jazz Scat patch.

Digging for Sounds

Because there are only 13 buttons on the top of the FP-30, accessing many of its functions and sounds requires you to use button and keyboard-note combinations (see Figure 1). Moreover, there are no dials or sliders for control and no display to see what you've selected.

The FP-30 provides 35 Tone presets. To select a preset within the Piano, E Piano or Other category, press a Tone button along with the appropriate piano key in the lower octave; the full instrument list and note position can be referenced in the manual. To layer a pair of sounds, press two Tone buttons simultaneously. The FP-30 also holds 30 songs and a collection of eight drum patterns, the latter being 1- and 2-bar loops in a variety of styles.

To access the majority of parameter settings, hold down the Function button and press a piano key. The features available include ambience, EQ, transposition, selecting an internal song, dialing in an exact metronome tempo, and tuning. Although there are some lightly printed reminders on the instrument itself, they don't cover all the functions. So until you memorize the control sequences you are likely to use most often, you'll need the manual by your side.

The challenges of remembering how to navigate the interface kept me from bringing the FP-30 to a complex real-world gig where I had to quickly change sounds, set split-levels and do instant, reliable transpositions. On the other hand, I had no trouble using it for a party where I only needed an acoustic piano, a couple of EPs and acoustic bass. And throughout, the Tones sounded gorgeous, whether they were heard through my P.A. speakers or my keyboard amp.

Check It Out

Overall, the FP-30 is an expressive and fine sounding musical instrument, and it is a must-play if you're shopping for a digital keyboard for home or stage. ♫

KORG volca fm

BY FRANCIS PRÈVE

Keyboard K KEYBUY AWARD

KORG'S VOLCA LINE OF AFFORDABLE, BATTERY-POWERED GROOVEBOXES has become a staple in electronic production since their introduction in late 2013. With previous models offering analog drums, bass, leads, as well as sample playback, the product line covers a lot of ground. This year, Korg surprised everyone with the introduction of a brand new unit: The volca fm, a three-voice FM synth that includes feature parity with Yamaha's legendary DX-7.

Cosmetically, the volca fm is more or less identical to its predecessors, with a cheeky nod to the original DX-7's brown and turquoise color scheme. Other volca amenities, like analog voltage sync, DIN MIDI input, and an intuitive step-sequencer are in place as well, allowing seamless integration with the other grooveboxes. I recently took the volca fm out for a spin and here's my take.

FM Engine

The volca fm's knobs and sliders deliver real-time control over several genuinely relevant FM parameters, such as attack and decay/release for one carrier and one modulator. If you're new to FM, this means you can quickly adjust both the amplifier envelope (the carrier) and the timbre envelope (the modulator). In addition, there's a dedicated knob for selecting the FM algorithm, instantly giving you 32 variations for each of the unit's 16 presets.

Other real-time controls include rate and depth for the pitch LFO, and sliders for both velocity and octave range. The velocity slider is another source of instant gratification as higher levels increase the overall intensity of the modulators in a given preset. That is, raising the slider gives a brighter, often harsher, sound as well as allowing quick editing for the velocities of your sequenced notes. And if the sound of real FM is a tad thin for your tastes, there's a chorus unit for thickening it up.

In addition to the real-time features, you can also access almost every DX-7 parameter—including envelopes and levels for all six operators—via deeper editing tools. While this is an extraordinary level of detail for a paperback-sized groovebox, the parameter select interface is a bit like trying to repair a Swiss watch wearing mittens. Fortunately, the volca's full compatibility with the DX-7 also means that you can edit its parameters via SysEx. While Korg doesn't offer its own software editor, the company recommends Snoize SysEx librarian (snoize.com). I also grabbed a copy of the freeware Dexed VST, which supports bidirectional DX-7 SysEx. With it, I was able to edit all of the parameters and transmit patches with zero hiccups.

Sequencing

The sequencer is identical to what you find in the other volca products, with a welcome expansion to 16 sequence slots. You can record in either step or real-time, overdub motion sequences (Korg's term for parameter automation), and adjust various step attributes on-the-fly. In conjunction with the unit's knobs, I was able to sequence some very dramatic timbral shifts. In fact, at slower tempos, the volca fm is wonderful for ambient and experimental approaches to FM, like Radiohead's "Idioteque."

On the performance side, the volca sequencer is also capable of changing the sequence length, step duration, and active steps as a sequence plays; great for keeping things dynamic in a live gig. Thanks to its voltage trigger input and MIDI sync, you can incorporate it into a wide assortment of rigs (including Ableton Link) without missing a beat.

FM You Can Carry

On its own, the volca fm is a powerful little synth that's basically a three-voice DX-7 with real-time control over useful parameters. Paired with the freeware Dexed plug-in, it's an FM powerhouse that will satisfy both vintage synth nerds and dance music producers looking for that hard-edged FM growl. Either way, it's an absolute Key Buy for any studio or live rig.

Snap Judgment

PROS Comprehensive FM architecture based on the original DX-7. Real-time control of useful FM parameters. Imports DX-7 patches over MIDI SysEx. Sequencer includes parameter automation.

CONS Three-voice polyphony.

Bottom Line

A DX-7 that fits in your backpack.

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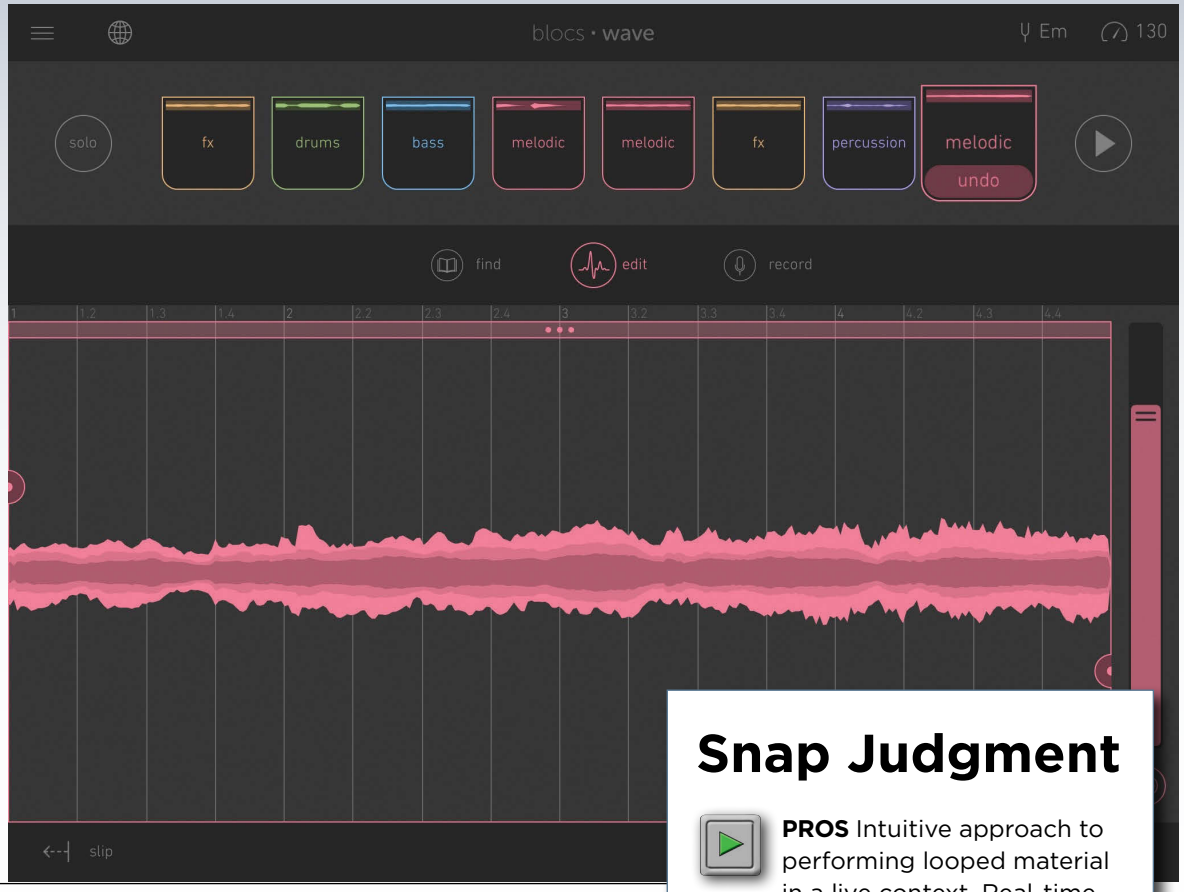

Blocs

WAVE (FOR IPAD AND IPHONE)

BY FRANCIS PRÈVE

IT SURE SEEMS LIKE 2016 IS THE YEAR WHEN SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS, FINALLY realizing that the success of Ableton Live is no fluke, have set their sites on emulating Live's real-time approach to mixing and matching collections of perfectly synced loops. First, Apple came along with GarageBand 2.1 for iOS, introducing the not-so-subtly named Live Loops approach to loop-based composition. Now, it's a new company called Blocs (an offshoot of Novation), with a brand-new app for both iPad and iPhone called Wave.

Unlike Live, Wave's focus is squarely on performance, with a gorgeous and intuitive interface that includes a top row for toggling loops on/off and larger lower area for editing audio-based loops. The loops can be derived from one of three sources—the onboard library, on-the-fly recording, or sounds imported via AudioCopy or AudioShare apps (which requires a trip to the iTunes store for the free software).

In Wave, users start by creating a Project, a collection of up to eight loops that comprise a given groove. Wave's system categorizes these loops as either drums, bass, melodic, FX, vocal, or percussion, and color codes each type accordingly. Included in the basic package are six collections of loops organized loosely by genres that include hip-hop, cinematic, trap, funk, future house, and rock. Overall, these loops are spot-on in terms of sounding legitimate and useful. And if the base collection doesn't suit your tastes, the app includes a store for in-app purchases of additional loop packs, which are generally priced at $1.99, making them great little impulse buys.

The factory material is solid, but if you want to roll your own loops, you can easily do so, either by importing audio or recording your own material directly into your iOS device. Here, you can record freestyle and edit later or specify loop length beforehand for easier integration with the factory loops. Once your loops are recorded or imported, you can crop them and slip the start point forward or backward to get everything to align properly. From there, you can add metadata such as tempo, instrument type, and key, which oddly allows identification *only in minor keys*.

With your collection of loops in place, you can then perform them using the top portion of Wave's interface. Here, the eight slots allow you to toggle the loops' audio on or off, but that's it. No volume mixing or effects. Not even a filter. While it's obvious that these features are in the pipeline—either as in-app purchases or feature upgrades, possibly by the time you read this—it's still a bizarre omission from a new company that clearly wants to make a splash in this market. Even so, the interface is so attractive and intuitive that it's great fun to tinker with the onboard array of material.

As for exporting, thankfully Wave isn't its own walled garden. If you record something you want to use in a sampler or alternate platform, you can export it via email or AudioCopy/AudioShare. Wave also features Audiobus compatibility for integration with other music software on your iOS device.

All in all, Blocs Wave is a tantalizing first glimpse into a new loop performance platform for iOS. The user interface is intuitive, the factory content is legit, and editing loops is thoughtfully implemented. We're definitely looking forward to seeing where this platform is headed. ♫

Snap Judgment

PROS Intuitive approach to performing looped material in a live context. Real-time tempo stretching. Supports Audiobus. Feature parity on both iPad and iPhone.

CONS No mixing, effects or processing of any kind. Minor-key tagging, only.

Bottom Line

New loop platform with a lot of potential.

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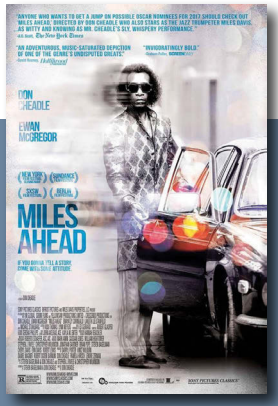
Music Supervisor Ed Gerrard with Dr. John

5 THINGS I'VE LEARNED ABOUT Making Music For Film

BY ED GERRARD



In a career spanning more than a quarter century, **Ed Gerrard** has managed numerous Grammy-winning artists and supervised the music for 20-plus films and television series, including the new Miles Davis biopic *Miles Ahead*, which stars Don Cheadle and features a score by Robert Glasper. Find out more at impactartist.com.

A FILM MUSIC SUPERVISOR WEARS MANY HATS. THE JOB INVOLVES WORKING with the director and producers to secure numerous legal music licenses needed for music placement. You're also involved with picking and creating new songs for use in key moments of a film. Perhaps my favorite job as a music supervisor is working with the composer on the film score that, in many cases, can make or break a film's success and enhance the audience's experience. Here are five things I've learned about making music for film.

1. Listen

Before you write a note of music, pay attention. A director will describe the feeling of the journey for the characters and the emotion of the film that they want the audience to experience. It's the music's job to take people there. Listen closely and take direction.

That's why they are called directors!

2. Know Your Audience

There are many different styles of films, from romantic comedies to super hero-filled action epics. The audiences that these films are made for vary from middle-aged couples to teenagers and even young children. Each audience reacts differently and at different times to what they are seeing and hearing on the screen. Remember that the music must reflect this.

3. Create and Connect Themes

Several themes are required within any single movie, potentially including ones for love, hero, villain, chase, tension, and more. Sometimes you need to "sell" these themes in as little as 30 seconds or less. Linking themes together and making them connect is the key to an effective score.

4. More Is Less

The last thing a director wants is a score that competes with a film's dialog. Whether a movie calls for a big orchestral score or a simple piano melody, the music must support the dialog and not overwhelm it. It must appear that the words are floating over the music, not drowning in it.

5. Enjoy the Process

Too many movies these days have sterile, boring scores. It often seems like composers are disinterested and simply going through the motions of making music for film. (And sometimes it is the movies themselves that are not very good)! Remember that music is the one thing that can make a horrible movie watchable. So create and have fun with the challenge of putting music to picture. Learning your craft is the first step toward winning that Oscar! ♫

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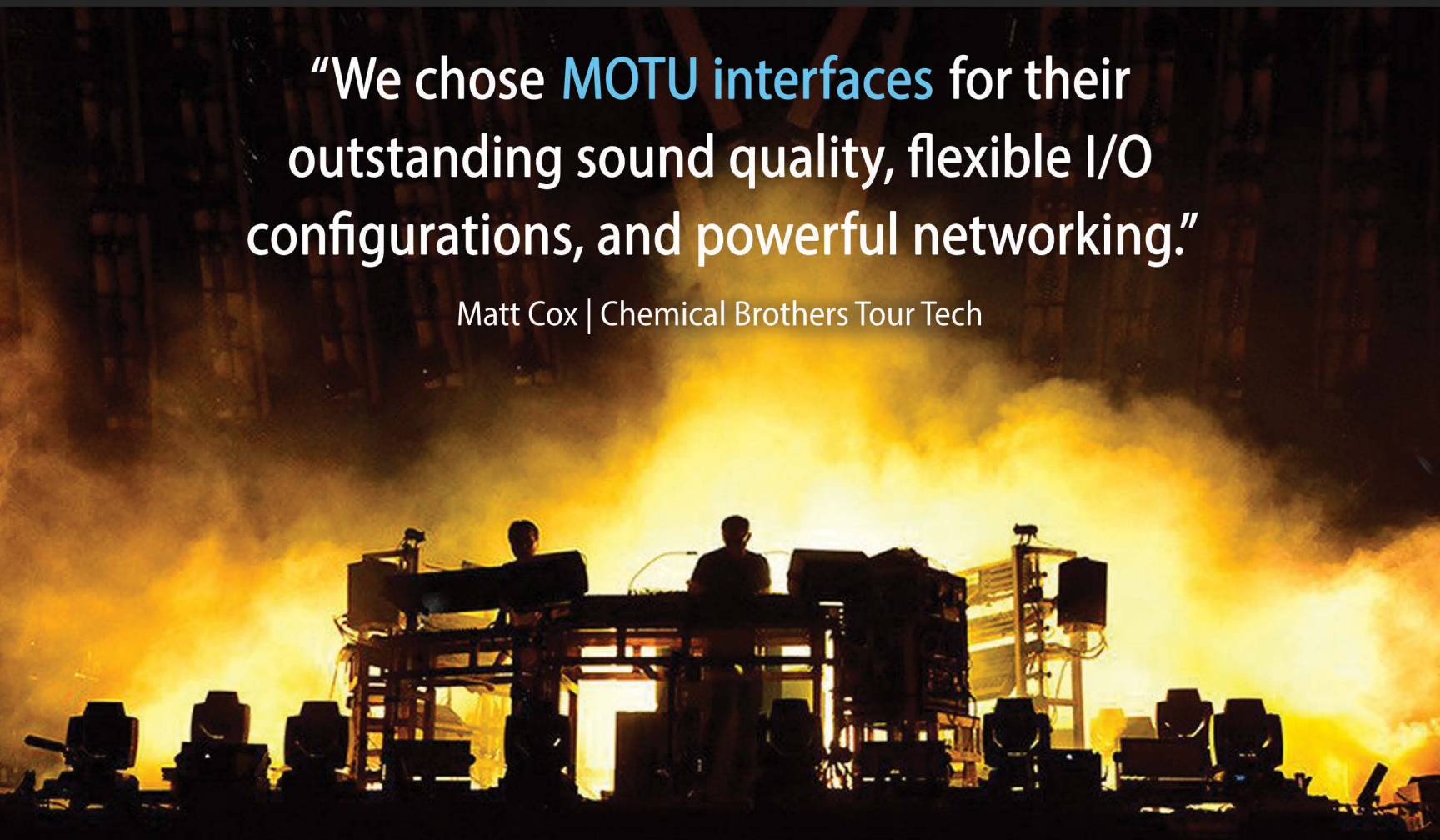

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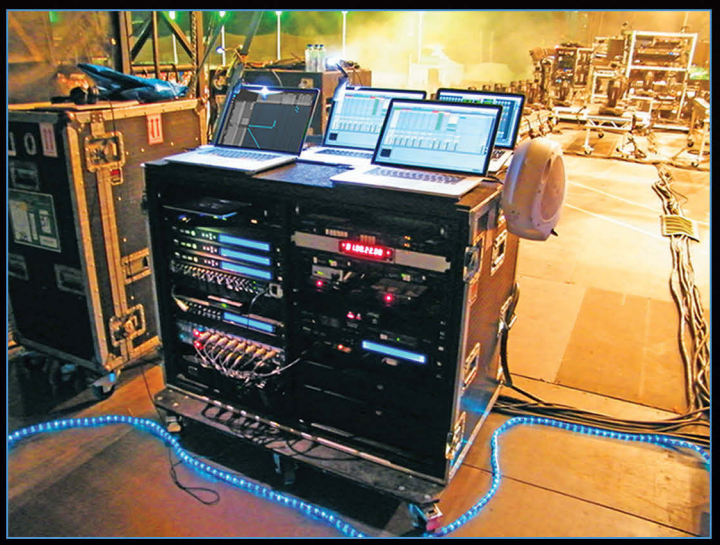

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